

That customary, unvarying, habitual, everyday, familiar, same ole routine. For people who crave change, that can be a dreadful thing. Even for the methodically-inclined OCP types as myself, and who are typically comfortable with the mundane, it sometimes becomes a bit of a drag. From the most elaborate and time consuming undertakings to the most simple of tasks, we moan and groan about the boredom from our routines. For most of us, there just isn't any other way around the repetitiveness in our lives. Fortunately, most often than not, within the dragginess of our routines, hide some perks…because nothing happens in vain. Recognizing them and taking advantage of them can turn them into blessings.

Such was the case for me when the Spring of 2004 found me switching to a new job. That was exciting indeed. It also found me moving to a new parking lot. And that was not. Now I had to drive to Downtown earlier just to get a decent parking space at this place, and that did not sit well with me, especially since my new start time was half an hour later than before. I found myself with over an hour to burn every morning and nothing to do except go through withdrawal symptoms from leaving my former workplace of 15 years. So much wasted time in that routine I thought. Then, coincidentally, or not (wink, wink), a month into this new job, one of my co-workers dumped a couple of interesting books on my desk, and so I thought I'd give them a read in the mornings. Viola! I got re-acquainted with reading taking it up like a chain smoker, and soon thereafter it was my writing that resurfaced.

So I set up camp at this quaint little table downstairs in my building, where most mornings I read and some mornings I write; where sometimes I'm joined by friends who pass by just to say hello or maybe share a cortadito; where I chat with the maintenance ladies, the FedEx office rep, or the shoe polish old man…come one, come all; and where I can also catch up on the phone with those I love.

Although I'm mostly engulfed in my books or in my writing, occasionally I do look up while I sip my cortaditos (yes, plural, because two cortaditos taste better than one cafe con leche…don't ask), and it's usually then that I notice what goes on outside – – like the long-standing, never-ending marching protestors across the street, how can you miss them, with their bucket-drumming, bottle-shaking racket. After a while your feet go to their beat like you have some uncontrollable twitch…not even the rain is a deterrent to these relentless souls. And of course people on their way to work, walking off the Bayfront mover station, crossing left or right (because if you work in Downtown you either work at the Wachovia building or at the Miami Center; otherwise, you work in that other part, you know, near the buzzards, from where the rain always comes around lunch time), all adhering to their daily routines. What perks, if any, have they discovered in them, I wonder?

Sometimes, however, my staring out sees nothing really, as I sit in stillness amidst the distractions and try to feel God's presence surrounding me. Something I realize we don't get to do much of during the course of our day, and which has turned out to be my favorite perk of this morning routine. Undoubtedly, the one time dreaded morning routine, turned out to be anything but. The reading, writing, friendly visits, people-watching, and most of all God-feeling moments, all serve to make up and enhance my so-called hour of sanity.

May I then highly recommend as a new year's resolution, whether you're into those or not, that you maybe try to find the perks hiding in yours. It's like the sun rising, quite the routine in this universe, yet how many times do we really see the perks in that? That with every one of them comes a new day, new opportunities to redeem ourselves, to hope, to grow in our faith.

So look closely at your routines, some may be a pain in the butt, but others, others may hold the potential to offer you, among other things, God-feeling time. Take advantage of that and make Him part of your routine, because we should, as someone once said, "Look for God, look for God like a man with his head on fire looks for water."

My friend, may 2008 find you looking like never before.

-by Connie Perez

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