



The Totally Fit Life is a program that focuses on being physically, directionally, emotionally, mentally and nutritionally fit. Oh yes, one more area of focus: spiritually fit. Yes, that's correct. A fitness program that includes being spiritually fit.

The description of the Totally Fit Life says it is not just about exercise or eating but much more: it's about the way a person thinks, feels and acts. Through camaraderie-building relationships with others- and accountability: the program puts participants into small groups that email each other about time spent exercising and food eaten and so forth- the program

encourages participants to stick with the program, resulting in a better life in each area of focus, including spirituality.

How do we define what it means to be spiritually fit? Let's look first at Jesus- seems a reasonable starting point! Jesus has been with his disciples for the past 40 days after the resurrection and before returning to his Father in heaven. During those 40 days, he appeared many times in many places. He has worked with the disciples and others to help them become spiritually fit- to remind them, once again, that they are children of God and to encourage them to spread the word of God's love for all in ways that empower each person to live a life that respects the dignity of all even as we acknowledge and learn from our differences. To remind them that there are really just two Commandments: love God and love neighbor. All of our actions flowing from these commandments will give us a spiritually fit life. To be spiritually fit means to know, at the core of our being, that we belong to God and that God loves us and expects that we will follow the two commandments to the best of our ability. To know that we cannot do everything on our own. We need others with similar beliefs to walk with us and to hold us accountable when we go off the rails.

One of the resources we have to help us be spiritually fit is to come to church on Sunday. Yes, there are always other things that we can be doing. But coming to church for one hour a week is a pretty small price to pay to remain in community with each other and with our Lord. If we are to apply the analogy of the fitness program, The Totally Fit Life, going to church once a week is about our commitment. Coming to church once a week reminds us who we are and whose we are. It reminds us that when we are challenged we have a sanctuary – a safe place- until we are able to get back on our feet.

Another resource is Scripture. Each Sunday we read from the Old and the New Testament. We are part of the story expressed in the story of Israel as written in the Hebrew Bible. And we are also part of the story we written in the New Testament. As we read in the First Letter of John, we have the testimony in our hearts that those who believe in Jesus as the Son of God have eternal life as our sins have been forgiven. While Jesus died once for all, and that death is over, we are never left alone to find our way. Commentators have suggested that what John meant by eternal

Acts 1: 15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1; 1 John 5: 9-13; John 17: 6-19

life is life with God – not life in human form for an unending time- which might prove to be something no one wants as we become more and more frail. Rather, we will leave the human body behind and we will be reunited with God. And that togetherness with God is what will endure. Our reading and our reflection and discussion of Scripture is an integral part of being spiritually fit.

A third resource to be spiritually fit is that we have companions on our way, here at St. John's and elsewhere. We are held accountable in how we live and how we interact with others. On most Sundays, we say a Confession of Sin- both of our own individual failing and those of us collectively. Someone once said when another complained about saying the Confession that he didn't do all those sins that week that we say the Confession because somebody, somewhere, has committed the sins mentioned, both those we knowingly commit and those of which we are oblivious. We say a Confession together because together we are the body of Christ. We are, in many ways, responsible not only for our own failings but often for the failings of others when we do not speak up.

We say a Creed, something we give our hearts to even as most of us acknowledge that there are parts that we don't understand but we trust. A priest once said that he expected the Creed to be read aloud each Sunday knowing two things: that no one person would read the entire Creed aloud and that the Creed, in its entirety would be read aloud. That is, each of us likely struggles with one or more parts of the Creed from time to time- but what you struggle with and what I struggle with may be different. And, between the two of us, the whole Creed is read aloud. Its part of being spiritually fit that we ask questions, we express our doubts, and that we are in conversation with others who may have different questions and different doubts than we do. Together, we can each grow in the love and grace of God when we remain in conversation with each other.

People both inside and outside of these walls watch those of us who profess a belief in God to see whether our actions are consistent with our beliefs. When we live in ways that evidence our love of God and love of neighbor, then we are, as the psalmist wrote: "like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; everything we do prospers."

Jesus knows that we will be challenged. Jesus prays for his disciples and for us that we may be protected from the evil one. He prays that we will know God's word as truth and thus the basis for our lives is clear. Jesus, as the incarnated God, has gone through everything that we have. We have the model, through Jesus, of how to respond to temptations and challenges of daily life. We have friends and neighbors who hold us accountable even as they walk the journey with us.

St. John's is our launching pad. My hope is that St. John's is a place where we can gather, we can learn, we can explore what we believe and how we will choose to live our lives. Then, just as a rocket takes off from its launching pad, we send each other forth into the world to live as Jesus calls us to live, loving God and loving neighbor.

Fuel for our journey comes when we gather together, when we read Scripture together, when we pray together. Our Book of Common Prayer shapes our believing by giving us a structure within which to explore love of God and love of neighbor. Our fuel also comes when we gather at the table and partake of the bread and wine. The Eucharist is the culmination of Jesus's ministry to

Acts 1: 15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1; 1 John 5: 9-13; John 17: 6-19

us. He feeds us with the bread and wine, his body and blood, poured out for us, the ones he loved and the ones who take his message into the world each day.

Whether we have always done everything the world expected of us or not, we still have a place at the table. In Acts, we note that even Judas had a share in the ministry. Perhaps not the share we wish to have, but it was part of the ministry of Jesus, part of the witness to God's love, that even death cannot separate us from God.

Fundamental to our daily lives is the assurance that God loves us and that we, in response, are called to love our neighbors. Come and be refueled each week. Be spiritually fit so that your light might shine, even unto the whole world. **Amen.**