



Working out.... Physically and spiritually!

By Natalie and Valérie Marion

Each month, Natalie and Valérie Marion invite francophones ages 18 to 35 to exercise their bodies, while becoming more conditioned in their Catholic faith. All via Zoom! The two members Saint-Eugène Parish explain how they were able to run loops around the COVID-19 pandemic by merging physical exercise with a healthy prayer life.



How do you combine physical training and prayer?

Natalie Marion: Every month ***Workout et foi catholique*** has a theme. Our most recent theme was *The Life of the Resurrected*. In January, it was *A New Year, A New Beginning*. People participate online, via Zoom where I host a 45-60 minute workout. Before we begin, we pray and each participant writes down a prayer

Valérie and Natalie Marion intention, which they offer up during the workout. During the session, we also offer, as a group, our exercise to the Lord. That, and the discomfort we might have when our efforts become fairly vigorous. Afterwards, during the cooling off and muscle-stretching period, Valerie and I offer reflections on our monthly theme and we close things with a prayer.

How many participants do you have?

Valérie Marion: About fifteen. Our idea at first was to offer the workout to the parishioners of Saint-Eugène, but there are participants from a variety of parishes who join us. There are even a few from Quebec and one from Costa Rica! People are getting on board. They want a challenge.

And what exactly would this challenge be?

V.M.: The one to give more to God. When we started in January, it was time for New Year's resolutions, such as eating healthy and exercising, but we didn't want to forget the importance of spiritual resolutions, such as praying every day, and ever more intentionally. In February, the theme of *Loving God, Loving Yourself* emphasized that it is often difficult to love yourself. We judge our appearance, our physique, and we compare ourselves to others. But God created us in his image. He loves us. What better way to welcome this Love than by loving ourselves in a more balanced way?

During Lent, our theme was *Our 40 Days in the Desert*. It's not only a reference to Jesus in the desert, but to the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola, which puts a lot of emphasis on the discernment of those thoughts within us that lead to consolation, or to desolation. As we did our physical workout, we prayed and reflected on how we live out our periods of desolation. What can we learn from our times of desolation? To answer that question, we have to do our spiritual exercises! Through them, we learn how to live times of desolation with love and learn to fast from what can lead us to desolation.

What are the benefits of all this?

N.M.: If I do a physical workout *and* attend to performing a spiritual one as well, I achieve a greater coherency. My body and spirit aren't at odds with each other. In fact, my whole being becomes healthier. And so I grow spiritually. The more I turn to God, the better it gets.

Do you plan to continue on Zoom after the pandemic?

VM: We would like to organize walking, snowshoeing or cross-country skiing. Even if we meet in person, we could still 'Zoom' for those who can't be there in person. COVID-19 has taught us that we have to adapt. The important thing is that we do EVERYTHING for the greatest glory of God.

To join the next ***Workout et foi catholique***, and get the Zoom link, please contact Valérie Marion at valmarion12@gmail.com

Interview by Daniel Bahuaud, Communications Coordinator at the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface