

Life and time move on, but the quest continues

Life. Three hundred and sixty-five days a year. Each moment of every day, the pendulum swings. The counter ticks.

Time. When does it get easier?

Graduation ceremonies are well over, except one. Recently, 59 other inmates and I participated in a graduation ceremony. The course: Quest For Authentic Manhood. Looking back on our journey, a fellow inmate and I began a conversation about life and time.

We sat there as I listened to the troubles of another man. Not long ago, he had tried to commit suicide. He was a problem child, things happened, and now he was here — in prison learning about life. We spoke about how time with God had changed him over the years, and his heart was no longer the same. I could relate. I thought about a painting my family hung in our home. A portrait of an obscure relative who just seemed to stare. Her look is etched in my mind, where questions abound, and the memory of that painting colors my heart. Life was simple back then — running around the house, with no time to stop and nowhere a care.



Guest columnist

Ricardo Cisneros

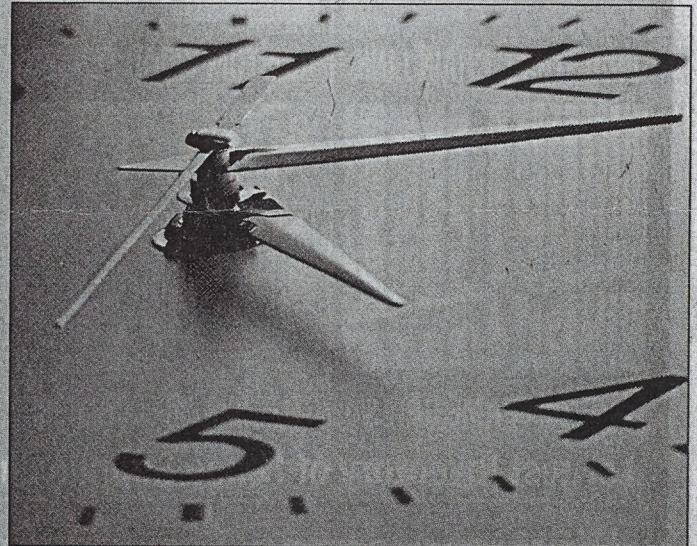
Then one day, I'm no longer home. I've got all this time, but no one to stop and stare.

A few days later I continued the conversation with a unit volunteer. He told me about a deacon from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Amarillo who recently lost two sons in an automobile accident. I was saddened. I have no

children, but I have a mother and father whom I cherish. My separation from them, I know, is a slow death. I thought about my father, and how even though we didn't have much, he always asked whether I had a "centavo" in my pocket. Then he'd toss me a few coins and remind me to always keep change in my life.

Now, the change in the pockets of my memory grows heavy with each year that passes. Remembering innocent times is sometimes painful, but knowing that "this too shall pass" is sobering.

Then came more tragic news. A plane was shot down over Ukraine by Russian separatists, and hundreds of people were killed. Why? I asked God, but no answer came. Only a reminder that wherever goodness and evil meet, there is suffering. From the moment we are born, the battle between good and



evil wars in our lives. We desire good, yet evil exists.

I remember my last birthday party before becoming a teenager. Nothing complicated — just a cake from Mom, a gift from my brother and a few friends at the last minute. I recall riding my bike as fast as I could, excited to round up my friends before it was too late. Then, 20 years later, it is too late. I'm boarding the chain bus to prison on my 33rd birthday. We all want good, and I don't want the birthday party to end. I want to ride my bike back home and be with family and friends — to be a kid again, and

rely simpler times.

Doing time doesn't get easier, and neither does living life, but God provides a good and simple way if only we spend time with Him, seek positive change and desire the goodness of life. And in between time and life, a graduation ceremony goes on — a quest that is not over.

Time. It does not slow down. The moon fades away as the sun comes up. A new day is on the horizon. Life. It doesn't get any easier, it only gets better.

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