



Sweaty She Monday (7/27/09): Catholic Mass in Spin Class?

By Susan Farago

Weekly Sweaty She postings can be found on "Sweaty She" on Facebook.com.

A few weeks ago I was pressed for time but wanted to get in a bike workout. Solution? Head to the health club for a one hour spin class. Now I will say that most spin classes are taught for "the masses" and not cyclists or triathletes. It's like aerobics on a bike rather than a bike workout. Nonetheless, it's still a good alternative to get my butt in the saddle and work those glutes and quads. And every once in awhile I run across an instructor who actually owns and rides a bike outside and it shows in their spin class instruction.

I walked into the spin class room and was immediately greeted by a VERY enthusiastic male instructor...we'll call him John. John had it goin' on! He was bouncy, positive, and obviously loved teaching his spin class. He was bedecked in spandex from head to toe and even had matching headband and wrist bands. He walked around the room with the click, clack, click, clack of his cycling shoes to check that our spin bikes properly fit us, to make sure we all had water, and to answer any questions. Just before he got on his bike at the front of the room, he eagerly wrote his name on the whiteboard behind his head: Instructor – JOHN. I was pretty sure I already burned 100 calories just from watching him bound around the room.

With music blaring and John at the helm, we began the warm up. Now I have to say right here that I am not an "out of the saddle" type cyclist. I climb and ride seated. And if I am ever out of the saddle, it means one of two things: 1) I am climbing a wicked steep hill and I'm about to fall over so my last resort is to use all my body weight to push down on the pedals to remain upright, or 2) I am pretending that I am Lance Armstrong and working on my "out of the saddle" climbing form so that if #1 happens, I don't actually lose my balance trying to get out of the saddle.

So back to John. I would say that within the first 2 minutes of the warm-up, we had been out of the saddle 10-12 times. I'm not kidding. Up...down...up...down...up....down... . This was getting REALLY annoying. After a few more minutes of this I decided not to get out of the saddle. So while everyone was "up", I was still "down". John looked over at me and mouthed, "Are you OK?" I nodded yes. The next time he yelled "UP" (which was about 20 seconds after the prior time), and I didn't get up, he looked hurt.

Oh for Pete's sake.

This whole thing reminded me of the last time (literally) I went to church with my husband Leary. He was born and raised in the traditional Catholic faith. I...was not. So shortly after mass started, it was, "all rise...please be seated...all rise...please be seated". Throw on some spandex, set up a few spin bikes, and change the priest's headdress to a head band and I'd be hard pressed to really see the difference between a Catholic mass and John's spin class.

After about 10 minutes of this "please rise...please be seated", I gave up and remained seated while everyone stood. I didn't really think anyone would notice but Leary (and apparently God) did. Instead of looking hurt, like John, Leary shot me a glance that said, "Lightening is going to strike if you don't stand."

Oh for Pete's sake.

While I don't mind tempting the fates, I didn't want to be responsible for an entire church burning to the ground. So I stood.

Back in the spin class, and after 50 minutes of countless ups and downs, John started to wind things down. As we filed out of the room, one by one, he stood at the door thanking each of us for coming. When he got to me, he asked if I enjoyed the class and I said I did (which was true...once I stayed seated). I secretly wondered if John was Catholic and had years of "please rise...please be seated" engrained into his psyche so maybe he couldn't help it? I didn't ask. But I accepted his blessing and, much like going to Catholic mass, I haven't been back since.

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