

A Steeler and a Monastery

by
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Perhaps the niftiest feature of Jefferson Township is the many picturesque country roads and trails. My dog thunder and I try to hit different parts as we run most mornings. You might say we especially like to take the roads and trails less traveled.

As tough as it is to drag myself out of bed in the morning, partaking in the unspoiled beauty of a wooded forest, a waving hayfield or the sun rising behind a silhouette of farm animals is something inspiring that never gets old. For some reason I always get a chuckle out of hearing those roosters crow.

While the leaves begin to turn colors this time of year, there are many postcard moments. Is there anything more majestic than watching deer effortlessly bound through cornfields or orange and yellow trees? I feel very privileged to be surrounded by such wonderful treasures here.

One of our favorite runs is along Golden City Road. It's a bit windy and hilly which Thunder seems to enjoy. I like it because it's beautiful and there isn't much traffic. There is one place that looks particularly serene as we run along that road. It's a Greek Orthodox monastery of Sisters called the Nativity of Theotokos. If ever there was a nice, peaceful, out-of-the-way place for a monastery, this is it.

I never gave too much thought to the monastery's purpose until my jaw dropped and hit the floor the other day while reading a Yahoo sports article over the Internet. Writer Jason Cole conducts an interview for a national audience with Troy Polamalu. He innocuously asks him what he does on his day off and the answer he receives is stunning. Troy replies that he and his wife attend a 4 hour service at Nativity of Theotokos Monastery in Saxonburg. I'm reading this and I'm thinking "you have to be kidding me, I run by that place all the time. This is where a professional football player goes to pray?".

While we Steeler fans all admire Safety Troy Polamalu who plays the game with a heart of a lion, it is his humility that has always stood out to me. OK I do admit I cheer wildly for Troy when he pops someone during the game but sometimes during his post-game interviews, his answers are so selfless I've found myself asking "is this guy for real". I'm not knocking the players who points to the sky, thanking God for scoring a touchdown, but I am far more impressed with the humility that comes from what I have always perceived to be a quiet, genuine faith.

As the Yahoo interview continues, it is evident that Troy is taking a path less traveled through Jefferson Township as well. Troy matter-of-factly explains that Theotokos literally translated is the mother of God. He continues "What's really neat about the Orthodox church is that it's like walking back in time 2,000 years to the time of the

Apostles, when they created these services. You walk into that and it's really like ... living it. They have maintained the truth ever since the beginning.”

Wow, whether you believe in what Troy is saying or not, it is unbelievably refreshing to read something so heart-felt from someone so admired, particularly by kids. As he reveals in the rest of the interview that his faith and wife come before football, you get the impression that he is not only for real, he is a very special person.

Now as I run along Golden City Road, I am not only inspired by nature’s wonderful beauty, I am inspired by the oasis of spirituality in a monastery that would support and nurture such a simple, genuine faith as Troy Polamalu’s. What a tremendous witness.

We have many treasures in Jefferson Township. Some display themselves on the outside. Others display themselves on the inside. And both can be found on the country roads and trails less traveled.



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