

SPIRITUALITY ON WHEELS



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By

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with the cooperation of Friends . . . 2017

INTRODUCTION	PG. 2-4
HISTORY OF THE BICYCLE	PG. 5-6
BICYCLE ANATOMY DIAGRAM	PG. 7-20
* THE FRAME	
* THE HANDLEBAR	
* THE BRAKES	
* THE PEDALS & SHOES	
* THE RIDING POSITION	
* WHEELS & TIRES	
* THE CRANK SET	
* THE CHAIN	
* THE SADDLE & SEAT POST	
* SETBACKS	
BENEFITS OF CYCLING	PG. 19-26
HOW TO : TRAIN THE MOST IMPORTANT	
CORE MUSCLES FOR CYCLING	PG. 27-31
AT THE END	PG 32-34

INTRODUCTION

We all run in such a way as to win the game and take the prize showing that we have accomplished something. Something, or better somebody, is waiting for us at the finish line and beyond. In his book *Resisting Happiness* Matthew Kelly says: `It is only by placing God at the center of everything that we can make sense of life.`

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way as to take the prize. Everyone who competes in the games trains with strict discipline. They do it for a crown that is perishable, but we do it for a crown that is imperishable..." 1 Corinthians 9:23-25

In his 1st Letter to the Corinthians St. Paul is reminding us how his whole life was a journey: a great marathon. He ran for a special reward and so do we. There is a crown that we are going to receive when we enter into the glory of "eternal life". I believe so! He is encouraging us to "run in such a way as to take the prize" and to train ourselves daily "with strict discipline". All athletes know about discipline and training if they want to be winners!

This little reflection about cycling and competition reminds us to do our best and enjoy the beauty of being alive knowing that we are not alone on the journey. Our political, social and economic lives are continuous reminders of the unending competition we face as our lives speed by.

Someone said: "If you want to go fast - go alone but if you want to go far, go together". This I believe is a great invitation to join the life of family and community. We run or walk together because we are a family. We are all born into our family and later we discover that there is a much larger family, one we call society.

There is also a spiritual family we are born into with Baptism called the Church, and as Christians we know that this community of faith is also a great family of individuals all running or walking this unique journey of life. This kind of adventure is not a competition but a way to share space and time in a beautiful way with many others who are sharing the journey. We learn as we go along.

I do not clearly remember when I took my first step on this journey, but my parents told me I was around 9 months old and from that moment on the adventure of moving and running and falling was one of the joys of my life. Later, at the age of 7, I discovered a great interest in my brother's bicycle and learned how much faster and further I was able to go with the thrill of being on two wheels. Cycling became my second means of transportation and in the freedom of riding I learned the beauty of balance and speed. The second greatest sport practiced by many in Italy after soccer is cycling. Every since I can remember the professional Tour of Italy drew millions of devoted fans to come out and cheer the riders. Do you know that cycling is the only sport where you do not need a ticket to watch?

Now after many years here in Canada when the long winter puts a temporary halt to cycling I look forward to pedalling during the summer weather, keeping the wheels running left and right around Thunder Bay. Winter gives us an opportunity to clean, tune up and shine the bicycle and perhaps lets us go back in time like in a movie and dream about youthful riding adventures, as well as future cycling trips. The passion for the wheels never dies. My definition of Cycling is this: "keep mind, body and spirit in motion."

What kind of blessing is available for riders whose friends speak with an Irish accent?

Here is one:

*"May the road rise up to meet you·
May the wind always be at your back·
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
and rains fall soft upon your fields and friend
but not when you are riding
And until we meet again, may God hold you in the
palm of His hand·"*

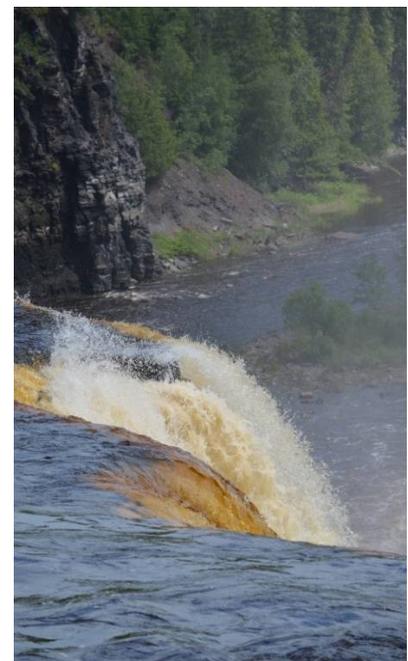


Many times during a ride outside the city surrounded by the peace and quiet of the countryside, it is easy to let your imagination run free. Sometimes a song or a picture starts to share the road as you are cycling. It's easy for the mind to wander and think of great spiritual thoughts. I may say that the best homilies come to me while pedaling but when I'm back home they have all disappeared. Pity the rider with many ambitious thoughts and no paper or pen in hand!

Perhaps our bicycles could be the source of blessings for us when we ride with a joyful heart:

*Every vision born of earth is fleeting
Every vision born of heaven is a blessing
For people, the sight of spring warms their hearts and
kisses their souls for better*

*For fish, the rhythm of the ocean is a blessing
The brilliant sun that shines in every minds·
For the heaven's earth and all creatures·
What a blessing is everything around me!...
The heart can't wait to speak of this ecstasy·
The soul is dancing the earth, saying
Oh God, what a blessing I am in ... --Rumi*



Looking at my bike these winter days seeing how shining and ready it is for the next ride in springtime, some colourful thoughts come to mind. I imagine the bike as the inspiration for a spiritual personal reflection. I thought: ``what if the bicycle and all its components magically started to engage in a friendly conversation with the rider.`` Let's call this dialogue a moment of spiritual awakening, a time of sharing in unique way called ``spirituality on wheels.``

So let's keep these magic moments shared in these few pages, and find a quiet place where our hearts may rest on spiritual winds and find peace even when we are on two wheels. Shall we call this "meditation on wheels"? Why not! But at the same time let's keep our eyes vigilant enough to avoid accidents when riding.

"Before we ask for our needs,
we take stock of what we have.
Before anything we may pray for,
we give you thanks o Lord:
that we can ride, that the day is ours to ride,
that our family, friends and neighbors can join us,
If we should ask, let us ask for what cannot be bought or sold:
appreciation of nature's beauty, deep breaths of fresh air
clearing our mind and soul.
A gentle tread upon our path on earth we ask
and your presence on the way ... These are the blessings we ask."

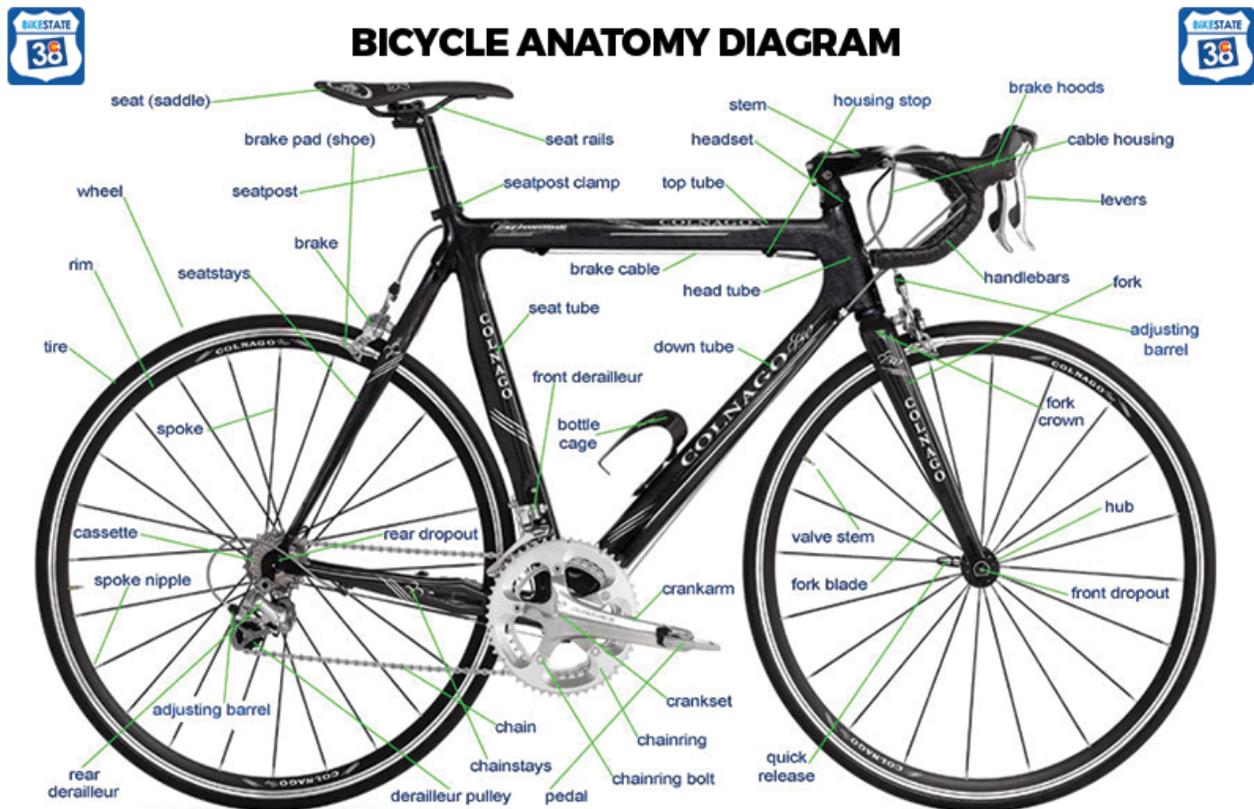


If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

St. Paul's metaphor of the mystical body could easily be applied to the life performance of a bicycle. Perhaps the bike may be seen as a body, a composition of many parts running properly and efficiently together. The same principle may be applied for people forming a Country, a community or a family. Even the most minor screw in the derailleur or one missing spoke in one of the wheels makes a big difference in the performance of the bike.

In the same way - mechanically speaking - we all need one another to function properly.



THE FRAME

Examining the design of a bike we observe that the frame consists of two opposing triangles with the seat tube in common. Triangles are known to have tremendous strength; in fact triangles are the strongest shape because any added force is evenly spread through all three sides. Theologically speaking any triangle recalls the image of the Blessed Trinity. In the bike, the front triangle leading and connecting to the front wheel is the great family of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The second smaller triangle could represent our human family, a family related or united in the Spirit of the Lord. The seat tube is the point of connection –joining our human family with the great Family of God. In other words it is the same Spirit who gives love and connects in both ways the blessing of the life in our family with the family of God. The triangle of Faith, Hope and Charity sustains all the weight of our human body and through these virtues we are in position to balance our life as a personal response to the strength of the first triangle: the Triune Power of Fatherly Love, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

THE HANDLEBAR

Wow, the Great Triangle leads us to the handler bar controlling the fork and front wheel. Having two hands on the handlebar gives us the freedom to turn left or right or stay in line just as with any decision we make in our lives. Often our spirit leads us to be in control and choose where to go. Sometimes the rider chooses to let go of the handlebar and feel the joy in the movement of legs and body being at one



with the bicycle. It's also good to do this to rest the back of the rider but not for too long: the asphalt and road ahead may hide some nasty surprises. I call these short times "let it go - let it be" precious moments in life when we let God be in control. This happened to Mary and has worked well for many other people open to the Lord's Grace.

"I am the Lord's servant, Mary answered. "May it happen to me according to your word." Then the angel left her. In those days Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judah," (Luke 1,38-39)

The journey of our life is a road to be travelled which is always ahead of us and of course has always a great sense of mystery in it. The handlebar looks like an unfinished compass missing the front upper part but also resembles a cross without the top part. It seems to be telling us that there is more road in front of us and we have to keep going, finish the ride and reach our destination even though we do not know what the road looks like.



The handlebar bears a striking resemblance to the Tau Cross, a cross which appears to be missing the top part. Some history may help us to clear up the meaning of this symbol visible in the handlebar connected to the stem and locked into the fork.

in 1215 Pope Innocent III called the Fourth Lateran Council in an effort to address the great need for reform in the Church and to once again appeal to Christendom, to take back the Holy Land from the Muslims. The opening session was an impressive gathering of Cardinals, Patriarchs, Bishops and other assorted ecclesiastical and political dignitaries. Also present was a poor man in a beggar's robe named Francis Bernadone from Assisi, head of a new order of penitents and mendicant preachers. St. Francis took to heart Innocent's impassioned plea for reform, which the Pope developed from the following text from the prophet Ezekiel:

“Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a Tau upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it... Pass through the city after him, and smite; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity; ...but touch no one upon whom is the Tau.”(Ezek 9:4-6)

“Tau” is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet and means “mark”. In Greek and English transliteration “Tau” takes the form of a letter “T”, which is also a variant form of the Cross. St. Jerome and other Fathers of the Church saw the Tau of Ezekiel as a solemn symbol of the Cross of Christ. It was now evoked as a symbol of spiritual renewal in the Church.



St. Francis heard a resounding confirmation of his vocation to “rebuild the Church” by radically embracing the whole Gospel and preaching penance and conversion. The Tau Cross became the mark with which he would sign himself, his brethren and all who would respond to his pleas to repent and believe. The Poverello's union with Christ Crucified in the depths of his soul was now externally expressed by the Tau. He set himself and his order to the task of preaching the Gospel with renewed zeal. This zeal sought to implement the Pope's commission so that all would experience God's mercy, and thus also avoid eternal punishment. Finally, St. Francis also saw the humility of the friars minor, called to be the least of all, signified in this last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Today there is in Assisi a parchment containing the blessing of Brother Leo, written in St. Francis' own

hand, which he signed with the Tau. Thomas of Celano relates that Brother Pacificus saw a vision of St. Francis with a Tau on his forehead (11Cel, 106) and thus the Tau has become especially associated with the Franciscan family.

THE BRAKES



On the left and right side of the handlebar there are the handles for the brakes: right to the back wheel and left for the front wheel. Good brakes not only place the rider in control, they also provide a sense of security even when they are not being used because they support and provide a place for your hands to rest during a long ride.

Do we need brakes in our lives? Yes, we do! How many times? I would say often. While we love our freedom and can feel trapped when some restrictions are put on us, we still need to be in

control as our lives speed around us. Whether in sport or in our spiritual life, sometimes we have to slow down, turn around or even stop if we notice that we are entering a dead end road. It is a blessing when you finish the season with no injuries! Good riders may always find a way to be thankful and positive as they face the challenges of the road including showers, mechanical problems and sometimes dealing with dogs!



Have you ever been followed or chased at great speed by a dog? It is a great experience with a shot of pure adrenaline that goes through your legs and arms first and into your brain soon after. We all love dogs, but why are dogs free on the road with nobody around them. I had this kind of experience with some German shepherds but it all came to a happy ending thanks to my fast spinning and the lovely down hill road inclination. Dogs love to chase cyclists because they are attracted to our legs and shoes going up and down quickly. I believe it is an invitation for them to start a run not for competition but for recreation ... they love running and playing with humans! A friend sent me another explanation about dogs chasing cyclists and this picture says it all: they see many fresh bones moving on the bike using their x-ray vision! So when you see a dog running after you it's better to go faster and try to outrun the dog. Generally a dog does not have much resistance on long run so after few hundred meters he will quit and you can get back to enjoying your ride.



I found this prayer interesting and I would like to share it with all my cycling friends:

"We are thankful that contentment can be ours in any category during any crisis. We confess anything standing in the way of clear conscience before God...We pray for cycling to bring out our best spiritually even through its disciplines, hardships, and challenges.

You're riding along and you've hit that groove where you're not tired, not straining, just very comfortable, cruising along, and you forget that you're you, sitting there, cycling, because you are just perfectly in the moment of the wheel turning and the pedals making their circle.



You're riding along and you see something of the natural world - the sun coming up over the city skyline, a mountain newly dusted with green, an eagle flying overhead - and you are so taken in that you forget you are the one who is cycling along, seeing these things. These things just are."

These are times to make a blessing as you go.

Blessings can play the role of an acknowledgement that for a moment, we are not an ego, separate from the world, but beings integrated into it. Blessings can also be an expression of gratitude. If we get in the habit of recognizing and being thankful for opportunities in our lives to return to who we truly are, we find more and more of those moments in our lives.

Like in most meditations, you can begin by being aware of your breath while on the bike. How does it feel to breathe in and out while you're moving along? You can spend some time here, feeling the breath going in, going out. You can picture all the good things flowing into your system on the inhale, and then the exhale is where everything you don't need flows out. You don't need to pull in forcefully the stuff you need, and you don't need to push out the stuff you don't. It just flows in and out, naturally. This feels very good. Is the breath of life sharing with you the beauty of the Creator who moves everything around you with gentleness?"

THE PEDALS & SHOES

Consider the pedals. They come in a variety of shapes and styles. We can see that they have to work very well with your shoes, and their fitting attachments are critical to maintain your connection with the bicycle. They must work properly in any situation because the propelling energy and balance is always connected with your feet at the pedals. Just as our shoes connect us with the ground and keep us in balance so must the bike pedals and shoes work together properly. "Give me a new pair of shoes and I will walk the world."



Pay attention to how your feet feel at each stroke. If you need to shift here, do so. You don't want to feel like your feet are pressing hard -- shift until you are one gear away from pressing, and the feet are nicely spinning. You should now be into a good cadence. You can feel how the feet and then the legs are working well. When your feet and legs are moving along with little effort, you can then check out the other parts of the body while you're pedaling. Does your back

feel relaxed? Hands? Face? Do you feel like they are all working together, smoothly? What about your neck? ... Wow, this is a real blessing when all parts work together in good harmony and peace like in this Hymn:



*"When God made man, he gave him all the earth,
All growing things, with every bird and beast;
Then Adam named them at the Lord's command,
Subdued the greatest of them, and the least.
In his own image God created man,
And when from dust he fashioned Adam's face,
The likeness of his only Son was formed:*

*His Word incarnate, filled with truth and grace·
To God the Father and to Christ his Son
And blessed Spirit heaven and earth give praise·
Creation with tremendous voice cries out:
All holy is the mighty Lord of Days·"
Stanbrook Abbey Hymnal*



Cycling shoes come in many shapes and colours and when the shoes and pedals are properly connected then it is safe to go for a ride. Pedal, shoe, cyclist and bicycle become one thing working together for a good ride. Speed and comfort depend on it. And it works the same way in our lives. When we are well connected with our family, our community, our place and faith ... all is just

running fine and smoothly and we are at peace.

Pedals come in a great variety of shapes. It is interesting to see how the evolution of modern pedals has been driven by the demands of competition calling for less weight and greater aerodynamics ... a competition of balance and technology with no limit ... I can also see that some of them are reminders of a shape that is familiar to all of us, the shape of a cross, a great reminder of our mortality and blessing.



In contemporary Christianity, the cross is a symbol of atonement and reminds Christians of God's love in sacrificing his own son for humanity. It represents **Jesus'** victory over sin and death, since it is believed that through his death and resurrection he conquered death itself.

THE RIDING POSITION

There is an interesting similarity in the position of the biker on the road with a baby before birth. I believe it is a natural position that is very interesting. This is a sport with a natural development in mind. At birth we are in the position to jump into the future with mighty energy! There is a great interest with future desire to finish the race any time we click on our feet onto the bicycle pedals and go for a ride. We are filled with this desire to accomplish and finish something that Someone has called us to share. This is just wonderful!



Our Canadian winter gives us a time to rest and contemplate future cycling adventures when the ice and snow have finally gone!

"It's winter in Canada
And the gentle breezes blow
Seventy miles an hour at thirty-five below.

Oh, how I love Canada
When the snow's up to your butt
You take a breath of winter
And your nose gets frozen shut.

Yes, the weather here is wonderful
So I guess I'll hang around
I could never leave Canada
because I'm frozen to the ground."



WHEELS & TIRES



Let's look now at the wheels and their function, namely keeping the bicycle rolling on the solid ground moving us forward. The first **wheels** were not used for transportation. The concept of the **wheel** actually grew out of a mechanical device that the **Sumerians** had invented shortly after 3500 B.C. in Mesopotamia—300 years before someone figured how to use them for chariots - the potter's **wheel**. No other civilization of their time had one.

This was a heavy flat disk made of hardened clay.

Today the wheel is made for movement and for transportation. The hub at the center has the duty to support and connect all the spokes together. It is the focus point and strength of the whole wheel. Strength is always the result of the unity of many different components in their order. A beautiful example of this can be found in society, family or community when everyone cooperates for the good of others resulting in blessing, love and strength. How many times do we say and feel the blessing in the expression: "We are a family" or "This is my home" - "This is my Country." At the end if we look properly we are all connected like the spokes to the hub and to the rim ... rolling happily towards a great destination! A spoke by itself is good for nothing. But if at the center of our universe there is a Hub (I call God) connected with the universe why not enjoy the blessing and the energy of being connected with Him and with one another?



There is an interesting history to the Ferris wheel. The Ferris wheel may be one of the greatest inventions of all time. It turned 100 years old in 1993. George Washington Ferris, a civil engineer from Illinois, invented the Ferris wheel in the 1890's. The first Ferris wheel was built for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair in 1893. The total Cost of the wheel was \$300,000.00. Mr. Ferris' invention was and still is the largest wheel ever built. It weighed 1,300 tons (that's about how much a herd of 2,000 dairy cows would weigh!). The Ferris wheel stood 25 stories high and held over 1,400 passengers. From the top of the ride, passengers could see 50 miles. It took 20 minutes for the enormous wheel to make

one complete turn. After the Chicago World's Fair, the Ferris wheel was taken to the 1904 St. Louis Exposition. After the Exposition, the wheel was returned to Chicago and dismantled because it was just too expensive to keep the wheel in operation.

The metal from the Ferris wheel was used to build a large ship, the U.S.S. Illinois, during World War I.

Both the ancient Greeks and Romans used the word "pneuma" to describe air and by extension breath or spirit. Pneumatic is the word we use to describe something that is filled with compressed air such as a tire, and it is that inflated tire that helps to make our journey even more comfortable. Is it not similar to the Spirit of God who sustains us and gives air and life to all? Air is the Breath of Life for our interior freedom: keep us rolling properly.

Did you notice that every wheel has a valve for the tube to be inflated with air? Well I believe that in the same way we need air, we need to receive the fresh air coming to us in the grace the Holy Spirit as we gather in prayer and receive the sacraments. For this same analogy ... we need to inflate our tires with the good pressure of Faith, Hope and Love because we need to run properly with our life on wheels.



The Holy Spirit plays a key role in the letters of St. Paul. Pneumatology is actually the branch of theology that deals with the Holy Spirit. The First Epistle to the Thessalonians, which was likely the first of Paul's letters, introduces a characterization of the Holy Spirit in 1:6 and 4:8 which persist throughout his epistles. In 1 Thessalonians 1:6 Paul refers to the imitation of Christ (and himself) and states: *"And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit"*, whose source is identified in 1 Thessalonians 4:8 as *"God, who gives his Holy Spirit unto you"*.

These two themes of receiving the Spirit "like Christ" and God being the source of the Spirit persist in Pauline letters as the characterization of the relationship of all Christians with God. For Paul the *imitation of Christ* involves readiness to be shaped by the Holy Spirit and as in Romans 8:4 and 8:11: *"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelled in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to*



your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelled in you." The First Epistle to the Thessalonians also refers to the power of the Holy Spirit in 1:5 a theme which persists in other Pauline writings.

So the Holy Spirit is the Power of Love in action; it is the energy that keeps our life rolling towards the right destination. So at the end of the day if we keep our connection with the Hub - Father and stay well connected with the love of the Holy Spirit who is always present and touches base with us like tires on the road of our journey, we may be more connected and secure in our ride.

THE CRANK SET

The crank arm and the crank movement remind us of our circle of life with each tooth marking one of the years of our lifetime. The crank in front also invites us to reflect on the hills we encounter that can make our journey very difficult and so we need to move the chain to an easier gear. Generally the crank has about 53 teeth almost counting as the weeks we have in a year of our life. The cassette on the back wheel with 6 or more gears works in harmony offering the option for a better setting to allow the chain to run smoothly. Cassettes of 6 speeds or 8 or even 11 are great reminders of the different seasons of life we can experience. Of course every stage of riding and life requires us to be in the right gear if we want to ride properly.



How often do we have to make adjustments because of what is happening in our lives? Making these necessary adjustments is a sign of wisdom if we do it carefully! So is the shifting of both the front and back derailleurs vital to achieve a consistent ride accounting for the conditions of the road, the wind and other possible interferences.

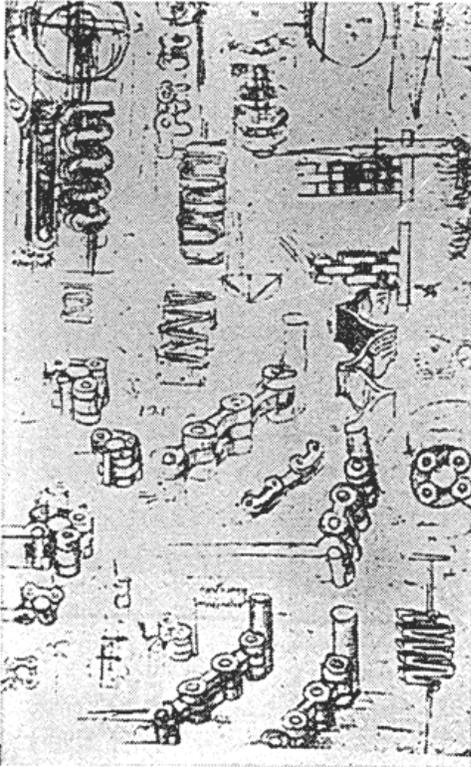


THE CHAIN



A bicycle chain is a roller that transfers power from the pedals to the drive-wheel of a bicycle, thus propelling it. Most bicycle chains are made from plain carbon or alloy steel, but some are nickel-plated to prevent rust, or simply for aesthetics. As early as 225 BC, chain was used to draw a bucket of water up from a well. This very early bucket chain was composed of connected metal rings. Let's look into a brief history of the chain.

The word meaning "chain" can be traced back to an ancient word in the Indo-European language family. As early as 225 BC, chain was used to draw a bucket of water up from a well. This very early bucket chain was composed of connected metal rings. These chains were probably designed for pulling, not wrapping, because they consist only of plates and pins and have metal fittings. However, da Vinci's sketch does show a roller bearing.



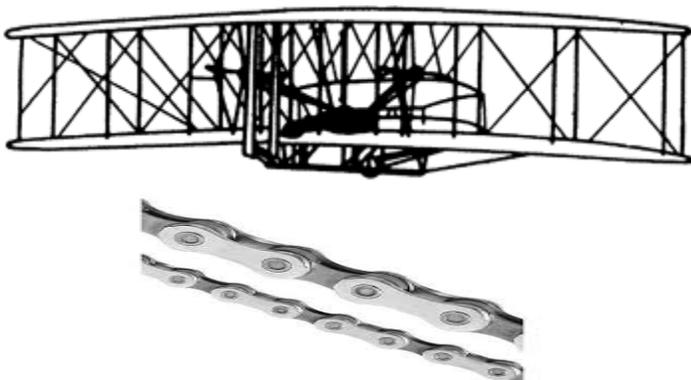
In the 16th century, Leonardo da Vinci made sketches of what appears to be the first steel chain. It took some time for the technology to catch up with the concept.

Initially problems with the manufacturing and processing of steel prevented practical applications of the chain until the 19th century, when new technologies made steel chain and bearings possible. In the 1800s, a Frenchman named Gull obtained a patent for a similar chain for use on a bicycle. This chain, called "Gull Chain," is still used today.

When molded chain was invented in the 19th century, things began to move rather quickly. First came the cast detachable chain, which is composed of identical cast links. Next, the pintle chain, which has a separate pin, appeared. The cast detachable chain and the pintle chain have been improved over

the years, and they are still in use today in some special applications. They are being replaced—gradually—by large pitch steel conveyor chains.

In the late 1800s, a new development—the bushing—revolutionized steel chain. Chains with bushings had greater wear resistance than Gull Chain because the bushing acted as a bearing, protecting the pin. At this point, the chain story moves into warp speed. Steel bushing chain was used on bicycles, in the rear-wheel drive of early automobiles, and, in 1903, as the propeller drive in the Wright brothers' airplane. The continuous movement of the chain reminds me of the circle of life which constantly moves forward passing through the various seasons as we move closer to the Lord in a wonderful connection. This I call "power in action - power of love" we are made-up.



Airplane built by Wright brothers



THE SADDLE & SEAT POST

Some of the most important parts in the bicycle are the saddle and seat post. The saddle supports all our body and needs to be properly installed at the right elevation for a comfortable ride if we want to last longer with less stress on legs muscles and pelvic bones. The saddles also come in a variety of shapes and designs to suit all kind of riders.



We sit on the saddle because, being centrally positioned on the seat post, it is really the right place for a rider to be in order to have control and balance for a good ride. In the same way our family is truly the right place for us to rest and find comfort, protection and trust.

The saddle and the shoes have to fit properly and be comfortable because no one can survive a long ride with pain in the feet and at your butt. That is why some injuries happen, not because you fell off the bike but because you were not sitting on it properly. This happens in life when people end up working at a job they do not like or find themselves in a very uncomfortable situation. If you are not happy with your job, family life, or level of self-esteem ... sooner or later you are going to quit and eventually collapse on the way. In life, as with riding a bicycle, we are called to prepare ourselves, stay in the game and do our best in spite of unpredictable situations and challenges we may find on our life's journey. Riding on a bike is a great responsibility for yourself and for others who share the road with you.

SETBACKS



Shall I call this a flat tire situation? So we must be equipped to have an extra tube, some essential tools and the pump with us if this should happen. Today it is



easy to have a cell-phone in our jersey back pocket to call for help and someone will come to pick us up. But it is always good to have some equipment available just in case we want to be self reliant, continue the ride and enjoy the rest of the day. When we stand up on the pedals we are able to succeed in making that stiff climb up a hill, and in addition, we can increase our speed and stretch our back and legs. Cycling is one of the great sports, teaching us to listen to our bodies keeping all the parts and feelings together for a better performance and safe result. When regularly practicing any sport we gain purpose in life, positive relations with others and self-acceptance.



Competence in cycling gives us a sense of well being and the conditioning and strength to

face any kind of emotional and physical stress. We all know that we can create equilibrium in our lives when our mind, body and soul are working together for the good of our "persona". Generally speaking we already know about the great benefit of recreation for our mind. The Latin expression: "Mens sana in corpore sano" ... Juvenal's centuries-old dictum to consider and work for a healthy mind (*mens sana*) in a healthy body (*corpore sano*) is taking on a literal meaning even today. Ongoing research is accumulating evidence that physical activity might delay neurocognitive decline and Alzheimer disease. Like St. Peter in his first letter I believe that there will be a great reward if we are able to be as persistent in our faith journey as we are in our exercising: "If you hope to the end, divine favor will come." (1 Peter 1:13)

This is also an invitation to never lose hope, never abandon faith in our ride to heaven where the Father who loves us and created us for happiness is waiting. As we trust our bicycle and all the components to work properly together and trust our ability and energy to keep a steady balance, so it is with our spiritual life and our relation with the Creator. Faith - love and hope that His guidance is always present and is calling us on a special path. Keeping this in our mind and in our heart as a real odometer will make us feel rejuvenated for all the rest of our life.

Keeping some water or juice in our bottle is also a good idea because perspiration and hot days in summer may be very stressful if we do not keep our body hydrated. H₂O is needed constantly in our daily life because our bodies consist of 60% water, and it is very important to keep it at the right level. Water also is used to baptize children when they become members of the Church joining the Family of God. The same level of grace and blessing has to be maintained during our life's journey to develop healthy, strong and beloved children - good riders - in the love of God. The location of the bottle cage is in the first triangle defined earlier as the triangle of the Father, the Sun and the Holy Spirit - the family of God. It is interesting to know that through Baptism we enter into this Family as Beloved adopted children. Wow, any time we drink from the bottle we quench our thirst in the love of God like St Augustine said: " Our heart is restless until it rests in You ..."



THE HELMET

The helmet is a vital piece of equipment to use every time we go out for a ride. It really helps to protect our brain in case of a fall or accident. In the same way the grace of God surrounds us like armour and protects us always from spiritual harm. So keep your helmet on all the time and also purchase a good pair of sun glasses to protect your eyes because the sun and the curious mosquitoes can give your eyes real trouble . . .



BENEFITS OF CYCLING

Dr. Retodo, medical services director of Kaiser Permanente Folsom (Calif.), is a cyclist who leads a Wednesday ride for colleagues, participates in several long-distance cycling races a year, and bike commutes regularly during warm weather months.

Kaiser Permanente Northern California's Anthony Retodo, MD



"There's spirituality to it. As you rotate the cranks, it's not just pounding your feet up and down. It's knowing how to equally push and pull, and knowing how to apply force in many different ways to deliver power. You also need to keep moving forward or you'll lose your balance and eventually fall. I lead colleagues up a steep ascent called Costco Hill during lunch. As we go up the hill, we become aware of the sky and sun, and then on the way back, we are aware of the

earth as we glide downward. Riding during the middle of the workday is also a great opportunity to get outside, relax and recharge. We can get so caught up in our work. When I return to the office after an hour of riding, I feel rejuvenated for the rest of day.

Cycling can be social. With events like the mayor's ride, you have a diverse group of people who have come together for the same purpose: riding. Suddenly strangers are becoming friends. That's what biking tends to do; it brings people together and moves us all in a focused direction."

So we see that bicycling is more than just a mode of transport from point-A to point-B. Nor is it simply a way to conserve gas money, get exercise, and save the planet...for me bicycling can actually be a meditative and spiritual practice. When I'm caught in traffic in a vehicle I, like many, often find myself frustrated and angry. When I'm on a bike life takes on a different pace...things are more relaxed, calmer...simpler.



Think about this advertisement: "It's time for the spiritual transition to a post-oil era. The internal combustion engine is suffocating our souls as it suffocates the planet. So give your soul a break from the gas-powered frenzy. Relax a bit, and join the spirited slow-down on a bicycle ride."

Live longer, become smarter, be happier, see amazing new things, and find more motivating reasons for everyone to jump on a bike this year and go somewhere. With a bit of planning, you can use your ride to pull double-duty as commuting or errand-running. We can go grocery shopping or ride to work while avoiding traffic and burning calories at the same time.

Type 2 diabetes—the kind that can be brought on from a bad diet, sedentary lifestyle, and obesity—is a huge problem everywhere. One way to avoid ending up with the disease is to simply get moving: Research in Finland has suggested that just 30 minutes a day on the bike decreases your risk by 40 percent.



The more you ride, the fitter you get: You might feel slow to start, but the more you ride, the better you will feel—increasing muscle mass and cardiovascular performance. Also the time you spend on the bike increases your joint mobility and helps protect you from developing arthritis as you age.

An interesting study done in London looked at 2,400 identical twins and found that those who

rode three times a week (for under an hour!) were biologically nine years younger than their sedentary counterparts. This I call the blessing of exercises any exercise. While cycling can be easy, super-long rides and intense intervals can provide a challenging workout. You can easily burn 700 calories in an hour, making cycling a great and fun way to shed weight, stay lean and strengthen your muscles.



Cycling isn't just good for your heart; it's also good for your mind and soul. Regular exercise is recommended for people who struggle with depression, and for good reason: Reports show that regular time spent sweating in any kind of exercise can help regulate brain chemistry and put you on the path toward a healthier, happier life.

Cycling—like all exercise—strengthens your heart muscles and lowers your resting pulse. All that improved blood flow will make your heart stay strong, decreasing risk of heart disease and early aging problems.



Your lungs will improve as your cardio health improves, but research also shows that people who ride to work actually have less exposure to air pollution than car commuters! Interesting observation!

Dozens of studies have been done showing that regular exercise—cycling in particular—cuts your risk for heart disease. The British Heart Foundation has even found that

roughly 10,000 fatal heart attacks per year could be avoided if people just exercised regularly. And it doesn't even take much: The Foundation suggests a mere 20 miles a week to cut your risk in half. If you ride for just 30 minutes a day, five days a week, you're half as likely to get sick as your sedentary office mates, according to a study done at the University of North Carolina. Human beings are made for movement ... we are souls in action! Who doesn't like to save a buck? If you have a commute of a few miles and riding is an option, think about how much money you'll save on gas over the course of the year!



It can easily add up to several hundred dollars a year or more. This works in a warmer country, but spring and summer till deep fall are great for cycling in Canada.

Several studies have shown that regular exercise improves your sex drive, and researchers postulate that it's because activity improves vascular health, allowing for better blood flow. It also improves self-esteem, which can help you feel better about your body. Speaking of sex, athletes of both genders have better sexual-health than the average person according to a study done at Cornell University. The results showed that athletic women delayed menopause by two to five years and athletic men had the sex drive of men two to five years younger.



The number one reason many people cite for not riding more often is that it could be dangerous. But a report from the National Institute of Health states that, "On average, the estimated health benefits of cycling were substantially larger than the risks relative to car driving for individuals shifting their mode of transport." So no more excuses! Cycling lanes in many cities make the rider even more protected bringing you almost at the door of your house in the city. There's nothing like a ride to clear your head for the rest of the day, and it's not just an emotional feeling: Research has shown that people who regularly exercise have less "brain fog" than sedentary folks. Wow, let's gear up and improve our brain life expectancy!



Research has shown that regular exercise lowers the risk of colon, breast, and bowel cancer. A Finnish study showed that men who regularly exercised or commuted by bike were half as likely to have cancer! So let's keep our immune system running good and healthy.

Studies have shown that people with regular exercise regimens are more productive at work and at home, so even if you feel guilty taking time away from daily life to sneak in a ride, know that when you get back, you'll be more efficient and on top of things you are planning to do.

Not only does your metabolic rate—that's how fast you burn fat—go up when you ride, but studies have shown that it also stays elevated for hours afterward. So even if you ride for 20 minutes, your body can be burning calories at a higher rate long after you stop pedaling. It's basically an exercise freebie!

When you start a regular cycling routine, your blood sugar levels become more stable. That's because your muscles are



processing sugar that's in your bloodstream to store for riding energy. It's a very clever idea to start riding and keeping extra calories out of the body.

A study done in 2010 showed that biking even for a few minutes a day may keep you from packing on pounds. Even if you only have time to ride for 10 minutes, it's going to be beneficial. Keep your bicycle handy!

Physical activity helps speed along your body's digestive processes by decreasing the time it takes food to move through your large intestine, limiting the amount of water absorbed into the body (you're too busy sweating it out), and the result is softer, easier-to-pass stool. Yup, another fun fact to wow your cycling friends with and stay healthy.



Cycling is the secret to staying young and active— crediting the fact that even after retirement a ride on bicycle is always a good choice. Researches back up. Daily exercise, especially low-impact activities like cycling,

have been shown to increase life spans.

Riding frequently causes your cortisone levels to even out, and your general mental stress drops. Even a tough boss won't faze you once you're riding every day. Families also may enjoy riding together and be inspired to do it more frequently.



If you already have Type 1 or 2 diabetes, riding regularly can actually help you manage the disease by helping your body regulate blood sugar . To be healthy is a daily choice.

Vitamin D is an essential vitamin that's found in sunlight, and the best way to get it is to spend time outside. Additionally, numerous studies show the calming effects of spending time in nature and in the sun. The benefits will bless your body and soul.



Cycling can burn between 300 and 700 calories per hour. Cycling at just a moderate pace for a few hours per week

could leave you 10 pounds lighter within a year. Stay on the two wheels and all will be fine!

Studies have shown that regular exercise helps keep your brain as in shape as the rest of your body, keeping you smarter for longer and in good shape.

Researchers at Harvard University found that men over 50 who ride at least three hours every week have a 30 percent lower risk of impotence. So for those who've been nervous about negative impacts



of saddle time, relax the truth is more interesting than opinions.



Let's face it: Cyclists have some amazing legs. Point, made. All the rest is a bonus!

A new study shows that people who enjoy their workout are more likely to shed pounds while doing it—and continue doing it to maintain that goal weight. And really, what's more fun than flying down a scenic road on a bike? Cycling keeps you a winner.

Research has shown that cycling can lower your blood pressure roughly 8 (diastolic) to 10 (systolic) points in a month. It also pumps blood through your system faster, making your arteries more supple, which can help prevent clogging. All will be well and better we'll be!

When you concentrate on riding, you block out all outside distractions and you enjoy almost all the same benefits as someone who is meditating.

Whether you opt to add meditation to your pre-ride process, or just get your meditation on during your ride, you'll reduce stress, lower your blood pressure, boost your immune system, and enjoy more focus on and off the bike. Stress is the number one cause of all kinds of sickness so get rid of it!



A study from Michigan University showed that women who exercised during pregnancy had better moods, an easier labor, and faster recovery after. Cycling is a low-impact activity that women can enjoy well into their pregnancies. According to the same MU study, newborns also reap the benefits when their moms pedal during pregnancy—they have a 50 percent lower chance of becoming obese. Riding makes you happier and calmer, thanks to the chain reaction of brain chemistry that pedaling helps

you achieve. Riding triggers primal impulses to nourish ourselves afterward, and when we do our body rewards us with hits of dopamine, which creates a pleasurable feeling of happiness and well being.

There's a lot to be said for the psychological boost you get from a chocolate chip cookie, fresh out of the oven. When you're burning extra calories from those long rides, you can indulge without feeling like you blew it and all will be just fine.



If you've ever done a really hard, long bike ride, you probably remember sleeping like a baby the night after. That's for good reason: The Sleep Foundation has said that physical activity improves overall quality of sleep—you'll get to sleep faster and sleep deeper the more time you spend in the saddle. This is a true story when we try it. You know that when feeling fatigued mid-day, a quick bout of exercise can make you

feel more alert for the rest of the day. It doesn't take much—just a short ride or a walk can have a great impact!

Whether you go alone or with a group, on the road or trails, pedaling a bike is healthy, fun, thrilling, green, challenging, and has a million other benefits. Whatever the reason, get out and ride. When on a challenging trip or even in the city, cycling's culture of friendliness and mutual support, especially when you have a puncture or other breakdown, continues to surprise me. This is a kind of sport and activity that seem to inspire such friendly connection among strangers!



I love cycling most of all because it gives me freedom. It's about being outside, the wind in your hair (that's right, even if you always have to wear a helmet) and the sights and sounds of life in the city or countryside. Why would anyone want to stay home and watch television all the time. Just get on a bike and go somewhere even for a short time: your mind will be rejuvenated. Some cities have also a tree-lined streets. I can't adequately

describe to you, dear reader, the simple beauty and joy of cruising along a tree-lined street on a bicycle, especially without the noise, pollution, and fear of death that dominates in our current transport environment. But there is no doubt that everywhere proper, safe cycle paths have been provided, people of all ages and abilities are happily enjoying the freedom to get around their community. And those who don't cycle also benefit from far fewer cars on the roads.



Family team at the Church of St. Anthony - Thunder Bay ready to go for

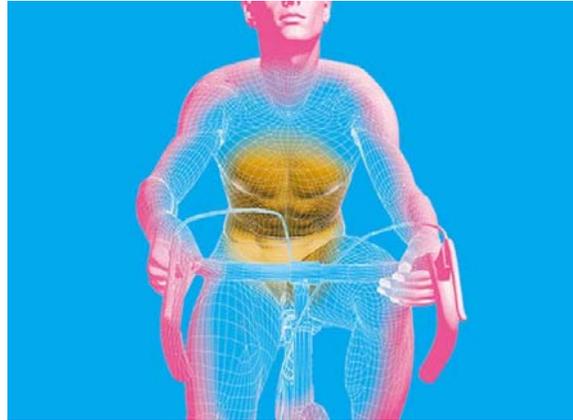
"Luigi On Wheels - July 2016"



On John Street on the way to Kakabeka.

HOW-TO: TRAIN THE MOST IMPORTANT CORE MUSCLES FOR CYCLING

Don't let a weak core frustrate all the hard work your legs do on the bike. Here's how to make those important trunk muscles strong.



Your bulging quads and razor-cut calves are the envy of your cycling pack, and you start every ride strong. As the ride progresses, though, your hips seesaw in the saddle, your lower back aches, and you slow in corners. The problem? Your core cries uncle long before your legs wear out. Although a cyclist's legs provide the most tangible source of power, the core muscles—abs and lower back—are the vital foundation from which all movement, including the pedal stroke, stems.

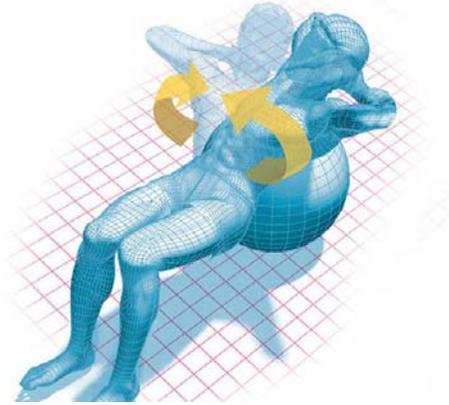
"You can have all the leg strength in the world, but without a stable core you won't be able to use it efficiently," says Graeme Street, founder of Cyclo-CORE, a DVD-based training program, and a personal trainer in Essex, Connecticut. "It's like having the body of a Ferrari with a Fiat chassis underneath."

What's more, a solid core will help eliminate unnecessary upper-body movement, so that all the energy you produce is delivered into a smooth pedal stroke.

Sadly, cycling's tripod position, in which the saddle, pedals, and handlebar support your weight, relies on core strength but doesn't build it. To develop your high-performance chassis, try this intense routine, designed by Street. It takes only about 10 minutes to complete and focuses on the transverse abdominals, the innermost abdominal muscle, which acts as a stabilizing girdle around your torso, and also on your lower back, obliques, gluts, hamstrings and hip flexors, so your entire core—and then some—becomes strong and works as a unit. You'll notice that it skips the rectus abdominals, or six-pack muscle, because, says Street, "it's the least-functional muscle for cycling."

Do this intense routine, in this order, three times a week to create a core that lets you ride faster, longer, more powerfully—and finish stronger than ever.

1. Boxer Ball Crunch

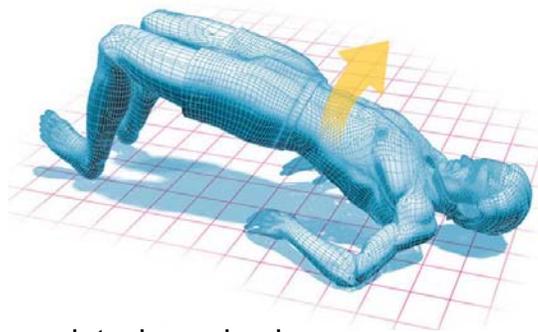


What It Works: Transverse abdominus, obliques, lower back

- Lie with the middle of your back on a stability ball, your knees bent 90 degrees and your feet flat on the floor. Place your hands behind your head, but don't pull on your neck.
- Squeezing your belly button toward your spine, lift your upper back off the ball. Keeping your shoulders off the ball, trace a clockwise oval with your torso. Apply pressure with your lower back to keep the ball still through the entire motion. After 15 clockwise ovals, trace 15 counterclockwise.

Why It Works: Despite the straightforward motion of the bike, your body moves in three directions: forward as you head down the road, vertically as your legs pedal up and down, and laterally as your hips and upper body rock side to side. "This fluid, circular exercise builds control," says Street, and that helps you minimize lateral torsion and wasted motion.

2. Power Bridge

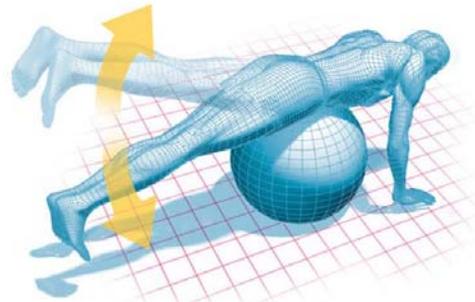


What It Works: Hip flexors, gluts, lower back

- Lying on your back, bend your knees and place your heels near your gluts. Arms are at your sides, palms down.
- In one smooth motion, squeeze your gluts, raise your hips off the floor and push up from your heels to form a straight line from shoulders to knees; toes come off the floor slightly. Hold for two seconds. Keeping your toes raised, lower yourself three-quarters of the way to complete one rep. Do 20 repetitions.

Why It Works: In addition to stretching the hip flexors, often extremely stiff in cyclists, the bridge strengthens the link between your lower back and glutes.

3. Hip Extension

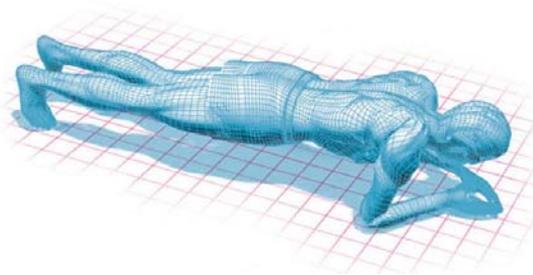


What It Works: Lower back, hamstrings, glutes

- Lying with your hips and stomach on the stability ball, put your hands on the floor directly under your shoulders, and extend your legs with toes resting on the floor.
- With a straight spine and shoulder blades back, as if you're trying to make them touch, lift both legs off the floor, keeping them straight. If possible, raise them slightly higher than parallel to the floor. Hold for two seconds and lower. Do 20 reps.

Why It Works: This movement builds backside strength, for added efficiency on the second half of the pedal stroke.

4. Plank

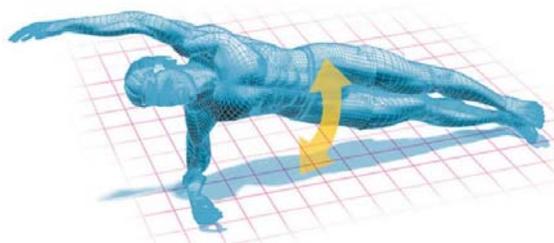


What It Works: Transverse abdominals, upper and lower back

- Lying on your stomach, place your elbows under your shoulders with forearms and hands on the floor.
- Lift your hips off the floor, keeping your back straight and abs tight, and rest on your toes. Aim for 60 seconds.

Why It Works: The plank builds the strength and muscular endurance you need to ride powerfully in the drops or in an aero position long after others have surrendered to the top of the handlebar.

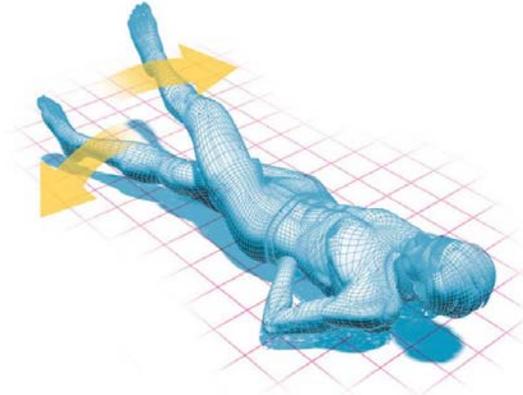
5. Transverse Plank



What It Works: Transverse abdominus and obliques

- Lie on your right side, with your right elbow under your shoulder, forearm in front for stability, and stack your left foot on your right. Raise your left arm over your head.
- In one motion, lift your hips to create a straight line down your left side. Lower your hips a few inches off the floor; do 10 to 15 reps, then switch sides.

Why It Works: Strong obliques improve your stability in the saddle, letting you take on hairpin corners with more control and speed.

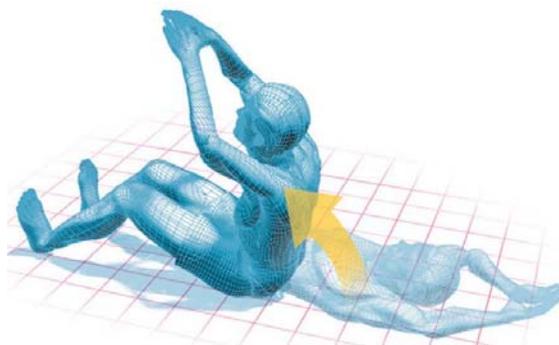


6. Scissors Kick

What It Works: Transverse abdominals, hip flexors, inner and outer thighs

- Lying on your back with legs straight, place both hands palms down under your lower back.
- Pushing your elbows down into the floor and pulling your belly button toward your spine, raise your shoulders off the floor and look toward the ceiling. Raise your legs 4 inches off the ground and scissor them: left leg over right, then right over left. That's one rep. Work up to 100.

Why It Works: A comprehensive movement that connects key cycling muscles, the kick also builds inner-thigh muscles, which help you achieve hip, knee and forefoot alignment for a proper and efficient pedal stroke.

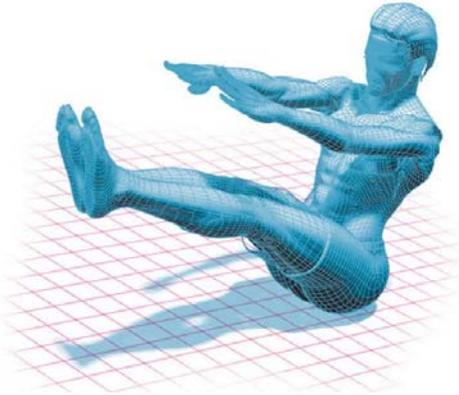


7. Catapult

What It Works: Entire core

- Sitting with a slight bend in your knees, press your heels against the floor. Extend arms to the front at shoulder height, palms facing each other.
- With a straight spine and upward gaze, inhale deeply, then exhale and slowly lower your torso to the floor over five counts as you inhale. Arms are overhead.
- In one smooth movement, leading with the arms, exhale and explode back to the starting position. Do 20 reps.

Why It Works: Contrary to its name, the catapult encourages supreme body control



8. Boat Pose

What It Works: Transverse abdominus, lower back

- Sit, resting both hands lightly behind you, and lean back until your torso is at a 45-degree angle.
- Keeping your legs together, lift them off the floor as you extend arms forward at shoulder height. Abs are tight, as thighs and torso form a 90-degree angle. If your hamstrings are tight, you'll need to bend your knees a little. Work up to holding for 60 seconds.

Why It Works: As with the plank, this pose builds the lower-back stability and core strength needed to remain bent over the handlebar for hours, or to blast up hills without compromising power or speed.



AT THE END



But at the end of the day there is always a word to say about our mortality and to face it with a prayer rooted in the Bible:

"No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death."
- Ecclesiastes 8:8

I am convinced that neither death nor life...separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." - Romans 8:38-39

"...and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think...be glory forever and ever. Amen." - Ephesians 3:19-21





In the Catholic tradition for centuries now, the imposition of ashes on that first day of Lent has been accompanied by the reminder, based on Genesis 3:19, *“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”* This is an invitation to think about this reality that soon or later will touch each one of us. This reminder is not to be taken as a negative wind for our cheerfulness and joy of life to but help us to be more humble and at peace. To some, of course, it can be an

invitation to depression. But spiritually speaking, it is an invitation to prayerful awareness - that our lives are fragile and fleeting - that we are not guaranteed tomorrow - that those around us—those we love, those we like and those we don’t—are also quite temporary. And it is an invitation to forgive quickly and to live gratefully, humbly and mindfully every day of our life. Perhaps not just for lent but throughout the year there are many opportunities to keep the prayer of our mortality in mind. Here are some examples:



1) You might preface each prayer with the imposition formula: *“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return,”* and follow it with *“Nevertheless ‘I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.’”* (Galatians 2:20)



2) Or you may say, *“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return,”* and follow it with *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*(Philippians 1:21)

3) Or, *“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return,”* followed by *“Yet ‘we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.*

Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.’”(2 Corinthians 5:6-9)

To pray the “prayer of mortality” through the season of life we are in is a wonderful way to keep our mind, body and spirit focused on what really matters. In any case, let me suggest other occasions to do so:



- 1) Anytime you pass or view a cemetery.
- 2) When you see or hear the popular acronym, “YOLO” (You Only Live Once).
- 3) As a funeral procession passes.
- 4) When you see a newspaper obituary or hear news of someone’s passing.

It may be no stretch for you to pray a prayer of mortality. Or it may be a totally new experience. It may even seem more than a little gloomy to you. But if it helps you to forgive someone or to be kind to somebody or to live more gratefully yourself, it can be a wonderful way to pray...and to feel gloriously human.

One final word for all who are interested to start practicing this sport. Do you know that cycling is a habit-forming? We don’t just cycle or think of cycling when we really feel like it.

Real cyclists are those who love cycling and do it with constancy, and that constancy shows itself in routine. Routine free us from the need to ponder small details over and over again; routines let good habits take over, freeing the mind and heart to move onward and upward. The more we practice the better we become. In cycling we hear, see, smell and feel to be close to God.

Hope you enjoy this little breath of "Spirituality on wheels" as a simple inspiration to keep our mind, body and Spirit in action. It is working for me.





BICYCLE ANATOMY DIAGRAM

