Rev's Reflections

They kept yelling "slalom!"

I was ten years old, when my father and his brother took my brother and me to Mt. Orford in Quebec to ski for the first time. They got us into the rented equipment, took us up to the top of the ski lift and sent us down the mountain without any instruction. So when they yelled "slalom!" I had no idea that they meant for me to turn from right to left. Worse, I had no idea HOW to turn from right to left. I had no idea how to stop or slow down, either. The slopes were terrifying.

That ski trip turned out to be one of the most frustrating days of my life. I remember choking back tears as my poor uncle had no idea what to do.

A couple years later, I joined the junior high ski club, which included ten minutes of instruction on how to stop, slow down and, even slalom down the hill. Ten minutes of instruction made all the difference.

I was thinking about this yesterday as I tried out my new serger. A serger is a particular kind of sewing machine that uses four threads and two needles to essentially knit threads into the edges of raw fabric, finishing them off so that they won't fray. When you have a serger, and know how to use it, it's an enormous time saver, and it makes finished garments look and feel more professional.

The thing is that the instruction manual gets into incredible detail about how to do basic things like turn on the machine and change a needle, but the effectiveness of the whole apparatus is based on the tension of the threads, and all the manual said was "adjust the tension as needed." Well, with four threads and eight points of tension control, I have no idea how to do that. I found some online videos, but they're all in Dutch. They don't help.

How much of life is like that? How many times do we find ourselves alone, trying to figure out little things like how to adjust tension or slalom

without any kind of instruction? When just a tiny bit of instruction would save endless trial and error?

That's one of the things I love about congregations. As we try to navigate the unknowns in life and how to be in healthy relationships, there's always somebody around, willing and ready to give a little advice — or just accompaniment — when we're trying to figure out how to do this better. All we have to do is ask.

Who knows? Now that I have mastered the art of the slalom, maybe somebody will be around to help me figure out the art of the serger.

In Peace,
Rev Denis