

13C 2019 SML
LK 9:51-62

I'll get to you Lord, right after I . . .

I'll follow you Lord, but first I . . .

It's called procrastination, and procrastination is a tell tale sign of sloth, one of the seven deadly sins. It is a disease of the will that causes us to neglect our duties. Sloth may be physical or spiritual. It is physical when it shows itself as:

- ✓ procrastination,
- ✓ laziness,
- ✓ idleness,
- ✓ indifference or
- ✓ nonchalance.

It is spiritual when it shows itself as:

- ✓ an indifference to bettering one's character,
- ✓ a distaste for religion,
- ✓ a hurried crowding of devotions,
- ✓ lukewarmness or
- ✓ a failure to cultivate virtue.

The classic description of the effects of sloth is to be found in the Book of Proverbs:

I passed by the field of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man. And behold, it was filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down. And as I gazed at it, I reflected; I saw and learned the lesson: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding in the arms to rest – then will poverty come up on you like a highway man, and want like an armed man. (PVB 24:30-34)

Of such indifference to duty, Our Blessed Lord spoke in the book of Revelation: “Because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of my mouth.” (REV 3:16)

The life and teaching of Our Blessed Lord never supported the slothful man. At the young age of 12, He spoke of being about “His Father’s business,” which was nothing less than redeeming the world. Then for 18 years, He worked as a manual laborer, transforming wood into:

- ✓ a child’s crib
- ✓ a friend’s table
- ✓ a Nazarene’s roof
- ✓ and a farmer’s wagon,

And during His years of public ministry, He would transform hard money changers and prostitutes into useful citizens for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Beginning His public life with calloused hands, He preached the gospel of work: “I must work the works of Him Who sent me, while it is day; the night comes, when no man can work.” (JN 9:4) His whole life, in His own words, was spent not receiving, but giving: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” (MT 20:28)

Our Blessed Lord earned the right to teach the necessity of work, and lest we live under the illusion that any other work is more important than the salvation of souls, He had something to say to the litany of disciples in today’s gospel who asked permission to be excused.

To the one who thought he was an exception because of a death in his family, Jesus said, “Let the dead bury the dead. You go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

To the young man who wished to be His disciple, but first wanted to bid farewell to buddies at home, Our Lord said, “No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.”

The Gospel records several instances of sloth. Two are worth noting. There were the foolish virgins, chaste for sure, but lazy. The wise virgins filled their lamps with oil and waited to

hear the steps of the approaching bridegroom. The foolish virgins did not think of oil, and tired of waiting, they fell asleep. When the bridegroom came, the foolish virgins needed to buy oil only to find the shops closed. They returned to the wedding feast only to find the door closed. Our Lord finished the parable with these words: "Watch, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour."

The second was the parable of the buried talent. He who received five earned another five; he who received two earned another two, but he who received one buried his in the ground. You wicked and slothful servant. Take his one and give it to the one with ten. From the lazy, what little you have will be taken from you. And the slothful servant was thrown outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

Common to these two parables is the danger of sloth and the necessity of work. Purity without good works will not save us any more than it saved the foolish virgins. Those who do nothing run the risk of losing the little they have, like the servant who was given one. In other words, it is possible to lose our souls by doing nothing. We lose our souls not only by the evil we do, but also by doing nothing!

Not only must we be aware of spiritual sloth, but we must also be aware when we “think” we have completed our work in this life, when we “think” we have done enough. One important word in the struggle against sloth is “finished.” The world judges us by results; our Lord judges us by the way we fulfill and finish our appointed tasks throughout all of our life. Note Our Blessed Lord did not say his work was “finished” until He was dying on the cross.

Learn a lesson from the rich man who worked hard, and stored up a bountiful harvest. “I know what I will do. I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones and I will say to myself, ‘Rest, eat, drink, be merry!’” Woe to him who stores up treasures for himself but is not rich in the things that matter to God.

A word to the spiritually fat: those who come to Mass all the time, pray all the time, are fed spiritually, but do not lift a finger to help at St. Mary of the Lakes or anywhere else. They do not burn any spiritual calories. Their defense. Oh, we were active when our kids were in school. We’ve done our part. Nowhere in Jesus’ teaching does it say that we’re finished when we’re still able to do more.

Others have no defense. For some, it never occurred to

them it's everyone's responsibility to help somehow, some way. It's the "many hands make light work." Everyone around here should be doing what he is able. That's the point of today's parable.

To those who cannot, either because their health is failing or their age is catching up with them, I only hope you can say to Our Blessed Lord what I was able to say to both my parents when their age and their health took the best of them. "Mom, Dad, when you could, you did."

Do not let sloth be on your list of sins come judgment day. Why? Because it's a deadly sin. If you can, you must. It is possible to lose our souls by doing nothing. We lose our souls not only by the evil we do, but also by doing nothing!