
Oh, the dreaded—the detected—alarm .. the daily toccin calling us forth from sound slumber unto another day's labor. Yet, arise we must .. though the warm tentacle of beddding warp themselves ever more tightly until we force ourselves from their oh-so-subjective embrace so that we might face the day. Each day becomes much like its predecessor .. as is its successor. As Job exclaims frustratingly: "Is not man's life on earth a drudgdyn? Are not his days those of firelings..who waits for his wages.." (Job 7:1-4)

Hemmm .. such a cherey thought.

Yet, that attitude can become embedded, especially as we reach middle age .. as not only days, but years, become much alike. We wake, we go to work, we come home .. very often to more work .. and then try to rest—if the mind will settle from the problems of work, family, debts, livelihood. Our lives can seem a continuous cycle of the mundane, broken up by all-too-flow—and all-too-brief—moments of rest or joy. When facing us worry abounds (as need for reality is met with the mythological Sisyphus, condemned to eternally roll the boulder up the mountain, only to have it ever roll back down again.

In our day we have so much, yet we often find little peace .. even with all the distractions which often divert us even from doing the good and the essential, and from that which leads to true and lasting happiness. We pursue ever-greater wealth, though scripture reminds us: "Wakefulness over wealth wastes away one's flesh, and anxiety about it removes sleep." (Sirach 31:1), and in Ecclesiastes: "What has a man from all the toil and strain with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sadness; in his work he is vexed; even in the night his mind does not rest. This...is vanity." (Ecclesiastes 2:22-23)

In all this chasing of material things, where is the fulfillment? Where is the happiness? We continually grasp smoke .. like the cat stalking the sunbeam, or a child chasing a butterfly. We work increasingly harder and longer to obtain more distractions in a vicious cycle—often losing what truly fulfills in the process: family, friends, virtue. When we actually acquire some thing that we hope will bring a lasting joy, it instead fails to satisfy—like the much coveted and then tossed aside by children.

We see daily the futile grasping of so many—those with the expectation that "just a little more" will bring them to the goal of contentment and happiness. Rather tragic, really. The material can alleviate discomfort, yes, but not bring fulfillment; there cannot but be always "something missing". But joy is not to be had so much in accumulating, but in giving—the giving of self.

This is because the ultimate source of our happiness is not in the material, but rather in the immaterial—ultimately, in love.

Who has not witnessed the sparkling eyes and sincere joy of a child presented with an unexpected gift? And though the countenance of the adult is often more reserved, imagine the mother who is provided needs and security for her hungry child—the same light shining in the eyes of her heart. We need only imagine ourselves in such predicaments (if we have not already experienced them in reality) to witness and understand how neither avarice nor selfishness lead to joy, but rather sincere generosity 

And so: "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ."  (Colossians 3:23)

Yes, inevitably our work often seems drudgory. But we can reciev our attitude to work toward the greater good. When we dedicate our labors to improving the world and helping the needy rather than buying more junk that we don't need, will not our work become much more fulfilling? If the daily grind becomes the "grinding of corn" to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, treat the sick, house the homeless, then we go to our work with greater spring of step and joyful anticipation.

Let our "first fruits" go not so much to ourselves, but to those who need—so to support evangelization in goodness and/or to assist those in need. While many have little time to actively serve the needy, all can provide assistance with donations, supporting by proxy what we may want to, but cannot, provide in person. If we mentally dedicate the first fruits of our day's labor as assisting those good works, it makes the day all the more joyeful and satisfying.

And so: "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ." (Colossians 3:23-

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free..Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn..Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am..' If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness..." (Isiah 58:6-10)

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