

Jesus teaches us: “Stop judging, that you may not be judged” (Mt 7:1). We make many decisions each day and it is hard not to utilize our God given reason to make judgements. Jesus is warning us “against passing judgment in a spirit of arrogance, forgetful of our own faults” (Note).

Jesus is a just judge who offers mercy. He wants us to use our judgement to offer mercy to others in return. Jesus is critical of those who find fault with others without first being self-critical. So, to make sound and prudent judgements, we must constantly examine our own lives for areas of growth as we ask the larger question, “What would Jesus do?”

August 21st is the Memorial of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga. He was born in 1568 to a wealthy Italian family in Castiglione. All around him were negative influences, worldly ways of fraud, treachery, deceit, and lust. His love for God and his moral compass called him to look on the less fortunate with greater compassion than the values and judgements of his family upbringing.

At age 7, Aloysius had a mature prayer life full of devotions and the praying of the psalms. He had a pious desire to share his love of God with others. Despite family objections, “by age 11 he was teaching catechism to poor children, fasting three days a week, and practicing great austerities.”ⁱ This helped him to put on the mind of Christ and to make sound and prudential judgements. He knew what Jesus would do and tried to follow the example of the master.

As a young teenager, he accompanied his parents and the Empress of Austria to Spain. There he acted as a page in the court of Philip II. “The more Aloysius saw of court life, the more disillusioned he became, seeking relief in learning about the lives of saints.”ⁱⁱ

While life in the royal court offered examples of how not to act, he also had many positive role models. “He encountered many holy people in his lifetime; he received his first Communion from St. Charles Borromeo and studied under St. Robert Bellarmine.”ⁱⁱⁱ He also had the example of Jesus. As a teen, he suffered from a kidney disease. He saw suffering as a way to model his life on that of Christ. He viewed his physical setbacks as a blessing allowing him more time for prayer.

Reading about the experience of Jesuit Missionaries to India inspired the young boy to pursue a religious vocation. At the age of 14, his parents would hear nothing of the sort. His father asked those inside and outside the church to convince Aloysius to give up any foolhardy ideas of a life of poverty. Called by Christ, Aloysius pursued his vocation and at the age of 18 renounced his family wealth in order to enter the Jesuits.

Religious life called for obedience and with an eye to improving his health, he was obliged to eat more, and to be more physically active. “He was forbidden to pray except at stated times.”^{iv} He spent four years in the study of philosophy and had Saint Robert Bellarmine as his spiritual adviser.

After several years of studying philosophy, a plague struck Rome in 1591. The Jesuits opened a hospital to care for the sick. Along with his brother Jesuits, Aloysius nursed patients and offered spiritual and physical support. On the front lines for helping others, he caught the disease and could not shake it. In a letter to his mother, Aloysius wrote: “When He takes away what He once lent us, His purpose is to store our treasure elsewhere, more safely and bestow on us, those very blessings, that we ourselves would most choose to have.”^v Saint Aloysius died during the octave of Corpus Christi at the young age of 23. He is the patron saint of youth, AIDS patients, and AIDS caregivers.

ⁱ franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-alloysius-gonzaga

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-alloysius-gonzaga-512

^{iv} Ibid, Franciscan Media.

^v anastpaul.com/2019/06/21/quote-s-of-the-day-21-june-st-alloysius-gonzaga/