

--Blessing of throats

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- Job gives us a cheery thought today in our first reading: *“Is not man’s life on earth a drudgery?...I have been assigned months of misery, and troubled nights have been allotted to me.”*
- That can rather strike home with us, especially as we get into middle age. We wake, we go to work, we come home...very often to even more work, then we try to rest...if we can settle our mind from the problems of work, family, debts, livelihood...
- Our lives can seem a continuous cycle, broken up by all-too-few, and all-too-brief, moments of rest or joy.
- When resting we worry about what we need to do; when working, we are longing for rest...like the mythological Sisyphus, condemned to roll the boulder up the mountain, only to have it ever roll back down again.
- And yet...we know that our good labors—in ways that we cannot imagine—work to bring about the fulfillment of the kingdom of God...as St. Paul writes: *“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 3:23-24)
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- In our day we have so much, and yet we often find very little peace...even with all the things to distract ourselves from the perceived drudgery of this life...distractions which often serve to divert us even from the good and essential—that which leads to true and lasting happiness: service of God and neighbor
- We work harder and longer to obtain more distractions! Seems rather contradictory, and a rather vicious cycle.
- And as scripture tells us: *“Wakefulness over wealth wastes away one’s flesh, and anxiety about it removes sleep...”* (Sirach 31:1), and, of course, Ecclesiastes: *“All things are full of weariness...the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.”* (Ecclesiastes 1:8)

- And in all this chasing of earthly things, where is fulfillment? Where is the happiness? We grasp for it like smoke...like the cat trying to catch a sunbeam. For there is no true fulfillment except in Christ.
- ...for, as Jesus says, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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- That is why in our second reading today St. Paul rejoices even in his very arduous work, because he knows he is working not for money or fame which is gone in that final moment, but is working for eternal life—not only for himself, but for as many souls as he can touch.
 - That is why he writes: *“I offer the gospel free of charge...I have made myself a slave to all, so as to win over as many as possible.”*
 - ...to win over as many as possible who will grasp that eternal rest and joy that awaits only in God.
 - This is why St. Paul preaches; this is why Jesus comes to us, preaches and heals, dies and rises again; this is reason for the existence of the sacraments and of the Church—to *win over as many as possible*.
 - Will all listen? Obviously, and regrettably: no. And knowing that, Paul writes one of his saddest lines in our reading today: *“I have become all things to all, to save at least some.”*

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- Yes, both work and recreation are both very necessary...but there is no lasting point in either unless it somehow helps to lead us to eternal life...through fidelity to God, and in good works toward others.
 - Paul says in a nutshell what Jesus taught: *“...we are [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*
(Ephesians 2:10)
 - In other words—when we seek only our own fulfillment, we are actually going against what we are designed and created for—to

love God, and to help others in need...both of which are the only things that bring us true fulfillment and joy.

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- So...like Jesus tells the apostles, go to a quiet, deserted place and pray and rest a while, and let God speak to you...but then be fortified for the continued work of discipleship most of all... bringing others to Christ as best we can by our words, deeds and example of virtue.
- As St. Paul writes: “...*he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life...*” (Romans 2:6-7)
- And Jesus exhorts us: “*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal... (Matthew 6:19) Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life ...*” (John 6:27)
- This is why the Church gives us countless examples of tireless saints who gave their entire lives for the word of God. And, of course, the example of Jesus Himself, who gave all for us that day upon the cross.
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- How we long to hear those words from our Lord: “*Well done, good and faithful servant.*”
- So let us work with all diligence to lead others to Christ and the salvation He offers us...and then, when God calls to us, we will not need to hide like Adam, ashamed of lack of faith or disciple industry, but rather call back to Him with eagerness and expectation: “Here I am!!”

Reading 1 Jb 7:1-4, 6-7

Job spoke, saying:

Is not man's life on earth a drudgery?

Are not his days those of hirelings?

He is a slave who longs for the shade,

a hireling who waits for his wages.

So I have been assigned months of misery,
and troubled nights have been allotted to me.

If in bed I say, "When shall I arise?"

then the night drags on;

I am filled with restlessness until the dawn.

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle;

they come to an end without hope.

Remember that my life is like the wind;

I shall not see happiness again.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

R. (cf. 3a) Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Praise the LORD, for he is good;
sing praise to our God, for he is gracious;
it is fitting to praise him.

The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem;
the dispersed of Israel he gathers.

R. Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.

or:

R. Alleluia.

He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.
He tells the number of the stars;
he calls each by name.

R. Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Great is our Lord and mighty in power;
to his wisdom there is no limit.
The LORD sustains the lowly;
the wicked he casts to the ground.

R. Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Reading 2 1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23

Brothers and sisters:

If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast,
for an obligation has been imposed on me,
and woe to me if I do not preach it!
If I do so willingly, I have a recompense,
but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship.
What then is my recompense?
That, when I preach,
I offer the gospel free of charge
so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

Although I am free in regard to all,
I have made myself a slave to all
so as to win over as many as possible.
To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak.
I have become all things to all, to save at least some.
All this I do for the sake of the gospel,
so that I too may have a share in it.

Gospel Mk 1:29-39

On leaving the synagogue
Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.
Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever.
They immediately told him about her.
He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up.
Then the fever left her and she waited on them.

When it was evening, after sunset,
they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons.
The whole town was gathered at the door.
He cured many who were sick with various diseases,
and he drove out many demons,
not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

Rising very early before dawn, he left
and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.
Simon and those who were with him pursued him
and on finding him said, **"Everyone is looking for you."**
He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages
that I may preach there also.
For this purpose have I come."
So he went into their synagogues,
preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.