

Ordinary 28A - 2020

"I'm too busy sending telegrams to build fires."

There is a good story from years ago about a top executive with a telegraph company who went on a trip. It was extremely cold outside when he arrived at the bus station, so he went into a local telegraph station hoping to get warmed up. When he got inside, however, it was cold. He noticed there was no fire in the fireplace. He said to the young telegraph operator, "Why don't you build a fire in this place and warm it up?" The young man said, "Listen mister, I'm too busy sending telegrams to build fires." The man then told this boy that he was the vice-president of the company and that he wanted him to send a telegram to the home office at once. The message was, "Fire this man immediately." A moment later the young telegraph operator brought a load of wood into the office and began to build a fire. The executive asked, "Young man, have you sent that telegram yet?" The young telegraph operator said, "Listen mister, I'm too busy building fires to send telegrams." --The point is that somewhere in life we have to set priorities. We have to decide what really matters and make certain that the really important things are done. Time with our family, service to our community, attention to our work, relaxation, self-improvement we could develop a list of important issues that would go on and on. Somewhere we must draw a line.

Who has time for God's Banquet?

There is not enough time. Particularly is that true for today's wives and mothers. A study by Bryn Mawr College one hundred years ago (1920), stated that women then devoted more than eighty hours a week to cleaning the house, cooking meals, and taking care of the children. Did things get better? You know the answer to that. Another study fifty years later reported that full-time housewives spent more hours doing laundry in the 1970s than they did in the 1920s, despite all the new washing machines, dryers, detergents, and bleaches. The main change was that the family had acquired more clothing and now had even higher expectations about cleanliness and grooming. In the second decade of the twenty-first century (2020), few women can even afford to dream of devoting full time to their families. Thus, the extraordinary demands of running a home are added to running an office or a classroom or a business. Who has time for God's Banquet? Many men have the same problem. A University of Michigan study found that one-third of all physicians in the United States are so busy working that they are two years behind the breakthroughs in their own field. That's scary.

We have crowded out God

A mental hospital developed an unusual test to determine when their patients were ready to go back into the world. They would bring the patient being considered for release into a room with a sink. When the patient entered the room a faucet over the sink was already on, the sink was overflowing, and water was pouring onto the floor. The patient was handed a mop and asked to clean up the mess. If the patient had enough sense to turn off the faucet before starting to mop up the water, the doctors concluded he was ready to go back into society. But if he started mopping with the water still running, more treatment was needed. [Vance Havner, *The Vance Havner Devotional Treasury: Daily Meditations for a Year* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976).] -- You and I need to stop mopping long enough to look up and see if the faucet is still running. We need to go to the root of our restless, confused lives. We have crowded out God, and without God life is simply a whirlwind of meaningless activity. We need to center our lives in Him and His purpose. Then we discover that life truly is a feast. He offers an invitation to His banquet table. Will you take time to accept?

Sunday Mass with helium balloons?

At an Evangelical church conference in Omaha, people were given helium-filled balloons and told to release them at some point in the service when they felt joy in their hearts. All through the service worshippers kept releasing balloons. At the end of the service it was discovered that most of them still had their balloons unreleased. If this experiment were repeated in our Church today, how many of us would still have our balloons unreleased at the end of the Mass? Many of us think of God's House as a place for seriousness, a place to close one's eyes and pray, but not a place of celebration, a place of joy. The parable of the Great Supper in today's Gospel paints a different picture. The Christian assembly is a gathering of those who are called to the Lord's party. In the Eucharist, we say of ourselves, "Blessed are those called to the Supper of the Lamb." -- The Lord invites us to a supper, a banquet, a feast. Can you imagine a wedding feast in which everyone sits stone-faced, cold and quiet? (Fr. Essou M.)