



“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Saint Paul’s admonition in his letter to the Galatians: (6:2-3)

STEWARDSHIP IN MOTION

Conquer Pride and Greed with... Delayed Gratification?

C.S. Lewis, noted Christian apologist and author, said that all sin ultimately begins with pride. Our pride - the sense that rules don’t apply to us or that limits are only for others - enables us to delude ourselves into thinking that we can take or get for ourselves whatever we want. To complicate the situation, a parallel companion to pride is another deadly sin - greed.

Greed is defined as “a selfish and excessive desire for more of something than is needed.” That can certainly be a defining characteristic of our society today. We have taken our blessings for granted and have substituted greed for gratitude in many cases. We want what we want now, and patience is not a consideration. Yet, getting our immediate wishes fulfilled does not deliver lasting satisfaction and does not satiate our deepest desires; in reality, it only stokes the flames of desire. Ergo, we plant the seeds of our own demise.

This materialistic impulse has many causes and ramifications. Certainly, we live in an age of materialism and hedonistic impulses. Modern life bombards us with images and sounds urging us to purchase more and indulge now. We are immersed in a culture that treats self-sacrifice and self-discipline as foreign concepts – even vulgarities!

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (6:2-3).

Yet, as committed believers we see – though often as if through a glass, and darkly - that our spiritual lives call upon us to combat our worldly impulses and to focus our minds and hearts on the greater joys that await us if our patience and prayer win the day. We have often spoken about a life of profound stewardship being a counter-cultural decision. We are called to resist the onslaught of the culture around us. This is not easy, but we should recall the words of G.K. Chesterton to serve as our inspiration here: “Only a live fish can swim upstream.” Because we know that pride and greed are destructive to our spiritual lives, we need to do

whatever possible to combat them in order stay “spiritually alive” for our swim against the current. We need to remember that we can call upon heavenly help in our struggles. Recall those important words of assistance in the Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel: “Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.” Our current consumer culture is certainly a trap of the Evil One, but one effective treatment to our lingering bout with the disease of

hedonistic pleasure is the cultivation of an inclination to delayed gratification. By putting our immediate desires on hold, we establish the strong foundation for greater satisfaction and accomplishment in the future.

Cures are often distasteful, but they are prescribed because they ultimately will be of greater and more lasting benefit than the short-term discomfort. Delayed gratification is a medicine that we need to take. Although it can be difficult to swallow, it ultimately will lead to lasting joy and is a way to live healthy lives in this hectic world. We can learn from our binges that

our desires are not aberrations but are unavoidable elements of our human condition, exacerbated by modern culture. We will continue to experience them, and they will overwhelm us whenever we permit our greed and pride to run rampant over our good judgment and humility. Delaying our gratification will serve us nobly in all aspects of our lives – in our personal relationships, in our prayer life, and certainly in our financial milieu. Of course, in our context, we'll focus on its impact on our lives of stewardship.

It is in times of distress that churches need more of our help, not less. This is because the material, emotional and spiritual support they provide us all will be needed all the more. I would humbly suggest that we think less about the economy's impact on our trips to the shopping centers – and to our tablets and cell phones – and a bit more on how fewer purchases might enable us to discover a better use for our dollars. We've all heard the adage about lighting a candle rather than cursing the darkness. It might also behoove us to reflect upon Saint Paul's admonition in his letter to the Galatians: **"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself"** (6:2-3).

We must lose the prideful sense that pleasure is the primary goal of our life and that we are the sole determinants of our own destinies. We profess our faith with the understanding that we participate with Our Lord on our journey to salvation. We are called to believe the tenets of our religion both in season and out, so our call to be good stewards does not have an exemption clause when our shopping desires bust the budget or our 401k balances take a tumble. Perhaps we have been a little too smug in believing

that, because of our "advanced civilization," we are immune from the vagaries of the market and of life; that our wealth will just increase unceasingly; and that we can always have exactly what we want whenever we want it. Our forebears understood some things we are loathe to accept – among them that thrift is a virtue, consumption is not always virtuous, and sometimes life will deliver events that are unplanned and unpalatable. As devotional writer Selwyn Hughes once remarked, "divine mathematics" is God's intervention in human affairs. While in the earthy realm, mathematics and logic tell us that by giving more we will have less, God's boundless generosity allows us to give – and then give more as our abilities to do increase – from miraculous intervention!"

Again, pride is at the foundation of our desire for pleasure and possessions. If we cultivate the virtue of patience – one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit – we will have established a bulwark against the assault our pride makes upon us daily. Let us close with this reflection with a call to faith from the prophet Jeremiah: **"Thus says the Lord, 'let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him who glories glory in this, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the Lord'"** (9:23-24).

Author: Harry Colin, Director of Development at Quigley Catholic High School, Baden, PA

DID YOU KNOW?

Saint John's Wort is a plant with an extensive history. While in recent times, some consider it a treatment for depression, in olden times the English thought it would ward off witches, the Germans tossed it onto rooftops to provide protection, Sicilians used it as balm for the wounded, and the Russians claimed it neutralized fear of water – hydrophobia!



www.cathedralcorporation.com

RHODE ISLAND
15 Blackstone Valley Place
Lincoln, RI 02865-1146
800-352-7375

LONG ISLAND
945 Grand Blvd.
Deer Park, NY 11729
800-698-0299

NEW YORK
632 Ellsworth Road
Rome, NY 13441-4808
800-698-0299

FLORIDA
6851 TPC Drive
Orlando, FL 32822-5142
800-852-3174

CALIFORNIA
1413 N La Brea Avenue
Inglewood, CA 90302-1218
800-244-3202