

A LETTER AND A CHECK

A number of years back I received a letter in the mail enclosed around a check for \$1000. The author the letter acknowledged that I would not know who he was but that he had been stopping into Saint Anthony's at the end of each work day and making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. He would just sit in the darkness and unload his work day and hand it over to Our Lord so that when he walked in the door of his house he would be ready to be husband and father more than tired worker. His disposition changed in the ten or fifteen minutes that he spent here each afternoon. He said that he would take a few minutes to revisit his work day and put it in the Lord's hands with the good and the bad. He didn't want any of that to be oppressing him when he arrived to be with those he loved the most in this world. He would leave it in church instead of dragging it into his house each day.

He said that he asked the Lord simply to help him make the transition before he arrived home so he could be what his family needed him to be. He indicated that he thought those fifteen minutes made him a better spouse, a better father and a better man. He attributed all this to Our Lord and what transpired in those short visits. He wanted to thank me for keeping our church open all day every day so that people like him could stop by. I have always been an n advocate of open churches precisely because they provide opportunities for exactly what he was suggesting.

He was grateful and wanted me to use the money where it would do the most good and so I put it in the Vincent DePaul fund which helps families and individuals in need. I learned some things from that fellow. He had made an assessment somewhere awhile back that there was something wrong in the way he was returning home at the end of the day. Things were not always working well. The way he was arriving wasn't cutting it. Maybe he was grouchy, preoccupied, weighed down, and frustrated, in his own world but not necessarily his families. Something was missing. Something had to change. And he realized it was up to him to do this. He thought through the situation. He asked himself how he could make it better. What would he have to change? He even prayed for some assistance, asking the Lord to help him, help him see the best way to proceed. Maybe he heard the passage from today's gospel, "Come away to a deserted place, a quiet place and rest a spell."

Why does the Lord say this to his apostles? Because it is often the case that our lives are so full that nothing else will fit. It is almost as if we have to empty ourselves so that Our Lord can fill us with good things. What good things? The virtues: Kindness, mindfulness, selflessness, compassion, care, encouragement, hope and of course, love. In Psalm 23 today we hear that familiar phrase, "Near restful waters he leads me, he refreshes my soul." Restful waters? My friends, the restful waters are Jesus. We are baptized into him, into restful waters. This past Thursday the gospel reading for daily Mass was the very familiar: "Come to me all you who labor and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart. And you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden light." I explained that Jesus, being a carpenter and working in wood had probably made his share of yokes for beast of burdens. Bu the image he is trying to project and the point that he is trying to make is different. He is counselling us to yoke ourselves to him. And once we do that and once we tap into the extra strength and the power that he brings we are able to do much more than we can do working by ourselves.

If we join up with him and align ourselves with him, if we let him join with us in our efforts to plow through life, things go better. Things get better. But we have to join him. We have to allow him to draw close, we have to allow his love, his power, his Spirit to align with ours. We have to choose—to be with the Lord. And choose—to let the Lord be with us. That, I think, is what that fellow did who wrote me the letter and sent me the check by choosing to stop into our open church. There are a lot of ways to break through in life. That is one of them. Find what works for you.