

EVER GET A WAKE-UP CALL?

Earlier this week I saw an interview of an American who had gotten involved with Al Qaeda, became thoroughly indoctrinated to the point that he was given the task of introducing others to Al Qaeda. He got caught and tried and sentenced. He did several years in prison but along the way he came to realize that the whole Al Qaeda thing was a hollow deception. He changed and decided to support the American way of life and to help authorities understand how Al Qaeda worked and operated. Now I am not real good at being able to evaluate or assess such a person's authenticity. Did he turn because he got caught and now it was more expedient? Or was his change real? But I must say that he deserves some credit at least for being opportunistic and enterprising. Otherwise he was going to spend a great deal of his life in prison. And so he cut a deal to save his skin. And it seems to have worked.

That is the point, to me, in the gospel story today of the conniving steward who was bilking his master's clients of money. Reluctantly the master gives the guy credit because he realized that his whole existence was on the line and he was not going to sit idly by. He was going to DO something. It might work. It might not work. But he was definitely not going to leave it all up to others to decide his fate.

So Jesus tells the story. What's his point? His point isn't about how ingenious the guy is or how shrewd and surely not how dishonest. His point is that the guy realized what was about to happen to him and he was going to try his hardest to avoid something really bad from happening. In a sense, he got a wake-up call. Like the Al Qaeda guy. A wake-up call. A lot of times in life when we get a wake-up call like that it's because our lives or our livelihood or our possessions or our relationships are on the line—big time. And we have to realize that our jobs are worth fighting for. So is our spouse. So are our kids worth fighting for. So is our sobriety. Our purity.

So is our relationship with God. You want these things? You're going to have to fight for them. My sense is that we don't always do that because we don't always want to. We don't feel like it. And that is immature. The mature response puts aside whether we feel like doing something or we don't. The mature person fights through his temptation to laziness and gets up and does something. The mature person doesn't look for cover. He steps up and acts.

Are you neglecting your relationship with Our Lord? Are you putting your family's relationship with God on the back burner? I was hearing confessions over at OLM last week. One of the kids confessed something like this. "During the

summer I didn't get to Mass as often as I wanted to." I said: "Did you want to?" He said: "Well, not really." Well that does kind of explain things don't you think? Do you want it? Is it important to you?

Recently I spoke with a parishioner who has been making his way back into the practice of the faith after a long and circuitous time away. But he is coming to Mass and wants to return to Communion. It's because of his child. For that child he wants to be a stand up dad. He himself would say it wasn't always like that. A wake-up call. Now he's willing to do whatever it takes. And I can help him. And others can too.

But it won't just happen. You have to wake up. You have to realize what's happening. Nobody else. You. And you have to do something. Even if you look foolish for a time. That Al Qaeda guy looked foolish. That conniving steward looked foolish. Looking foolish isn't the worst thing that can happen to you. Losing your soul is the worst thing that can happen to you. Not helping your spouse, your parents, your kids, your siblings to get into heaven—or not getting there yourself—that's the worst that can happen to you. God's word today is very simple and very straightforward. Are you on the right track? Yes or no. If no, do something. Keep doing something until you are on the right track. Don't make excuses. Make progress. Pray. Ask. Act. God's grace will be there.