

As we approach our walk with God



During the Lenten season I experienced God leading me to contemplate two prayers: “Lord, bless the work of my hands”; and “Lord, show me my part in your work.”

Both are appropriate for everyday life and ministry. Initially I saw the prayers as differences of style. Different personalities might have different preferences. I can see that in different circumstances I would prefer one prayer to the other.

I have come to appreciate that the two prayers are not mutually exclusive. In fact it would be wise to pray for God’s guidance and leadership as we plan ministry. It is equally wise to seek God’s blessing as we do what we believe God has told us to do. The sad truth is there are many times when God’s people fail to say either prayer. From time to time, each of us is probably guilty of acting without seeking guidance and without asking God to go with us. Perhaps we presume that God knows our intentions and would not allow our path to falter. But that is a huge presumption, with potentially disastrous consequences.

Let us digress for a moment. What would be some of the ideal characteristics of a true and loyal servant of God? We would expect someone who is zealous. It would be someone who is consumed with love for God, and God’s ways; someone who is single minded, not easily distracted; someone who finishes what they start; someone who is not easily discouraged; someone who overcomes obstacles. Are these things enough? One would think so. One would be wrong.

Let us look at the biblical Jeckyll and Hyde. Let us look at Saul/Paul of Tarsus. We have taken for granted that the early Saul differed greatly from the later Paul. But are we prepared to accept that the person who killed the early Christians and the person who was the Apostle to the Gentiles are essentially the same person. Saul loved God and was consumed by passion for God. He was jealous for God. He could not bear to see the ways of God defiled. He did everything in his power to see that the God of Abraham and Sarah was honored. So did St. Paul.

The only real difference between the two was that Saul only asked God to bless his labors, whereas Paul acted under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Paul was guided by God, Saul was not.

Now let us re-examine the earlier questions. Are we in the habit of submitting our daily lives and our ministry to Christ? Obviously, we realize that when we give in to sin we are not, but we probably assume that in our ministry we are. But are we?

Many hateful and sometimes violent acts have been done as acts of love for God. Wars and jihads are fought as acts of love for God. Acts of terrorism are often motivated out of the desire to please God. We cannot forget that many of the people, who are opposed to gay rights, are opposed precisely because of their love for God, while others support gay rights for the same reason. Since we always believe that we are acting correctly, we need to remain charitable with those with whom we disagree because we never know when we are the ones in error.

But these are examples of failure on a grand scale. Most of the time our failures to follow God's lead will be more innocuous. But what we will find is that our work is simply not producing fruit, lasting fruit or as much fruit as we are capable of producing. A biblical example of this is when Jesus tells Peter where to cast the net. Even though Peter had previously cast the net in the same spot without success, doing the same thing, under God's guidance and God's time, produced far more fruit than he could have expected or even hoped for.

In an effort to be more attuned to what God is saying to us, and to be more in step with where God is leading us, we at Holy Family have begun to begin our work day praying Morning Prayer together. Part of our prayer is the intercessions. We are trying to remember that we are a part of God's work and not that we want God to be a part of our work.

A biblical example of this is Moses. **God said to Moses**, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and **I have come down to deliver them...** So come, **I will send you** to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." But **Moses said to God**, "**Who am I** that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" To which **God replied** "**I will be with you.**"

We can contrast this with the young Moses who did not seek God. He desired to defend his kinsfolk so he killed an Egyptian who was mistreating them. But God did not ask him to do so and God did not go with him. So Moses runs away in fear.

Nothing has changed in the three thousand plus years of Moses. The world remains full of people who are both physically and spiritually suffering. God sees the suffering and desires to lead the people out of suffering. God calls us, God equips us and God goes with us.

It is a very humbling experience to receive the call to ministry. It is a grave responsibility. But thanks be to God, he calls us so that he can send us, lead us and go with us.

Fr. Louie Amezaga