

Fall sometimes we don't like to work, and the sin of slothfulness sometimes gets the best of us with the temptation of laziness. But working hard is part of God's design.

Recall the meaning of the 7th Commandment, which teaches us not only to avoid "taking our neighbor's possession and income", but also helping them to "improve and protect their possessions and income." That takes work! Work is good for it benefits not only ourselves, but more importantly our neighbors!

Occasionally, people fall on hard times. Sometimes people are physically unable to work. There is a huge difference between being unable and being unwilling to work. Let's tie in the 2nd reading from Acts Ch. 2 now. Vv. 44-45, "And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, *as any had need.*" This passage too is often used to justify Government policy, but that's not accurate to do so here either. Acts 2 just like John Ch. 6 doesn't instruct governments how to function or how to create or enforce taxation policies. Those things are an entirely different matter. These two biblical accounts instruct the Church. Acts 2 particularly instructs the heart of the Christian. This passage teaches us how to love our neighbor. Out of love not coercion, we share what we worked hard for with those who are *in need*. We give by love, not by force!

Experience teaches us this. I know for a fact that if I were to stand here and say, "Beginning next week, everyone must give 10% more to the Offering Plate to help the needy" and I followed it with some threat, you would rightly be furious with me, perhaps there might even be grounds for heresy charges! God gives no such command. But, if I said as I did a few weeks ago, "Someone's house burned down and they need help", you would provide in over-abundance, exactly as you did. Because this is what Christians do. We give out by love, not force. We share what we have, and we help our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ when they are in need.

This is also why I would never say, for example, that someone needed a certain amount of money. When we set limits, limits do what limits do: they limit. They limit our love. When you leave open the need, it leaves the heart wide open to give. You have modeled the last couple months exactly how the Scriptures teach us to give and provide for our neighbor. We do this because we model our love for others after Christ's love for us! Jesus loved us and sacrifice Himself for us, and gives us His gifts because of love, not because of coercion!

Yet the sinful flesh will always get greedy, which is why the Government does well to make rules and stipulations limiting potential for abuse. Look at our Gospel reading! After these people were provided for, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" Perceiving then that they were about to come and take Jesus *by force* to make Him king, He withdrew again to the mountain by Himself (vv.14-15). The people wanted to make Jesus a bread king. But Jesus is the Bread of Life. Jesus is the Christ. The people think to themselves, "Wow, this is pretty great. We came and listened to Jesus teach, and then He provided a great sign for us. We don't want a Christ who would die, we want a King who will fill our bellies so we can have perpetual earthly comforts!" St. John Chrysostom, an early Church Father said it best in a sermon on this text, "How great is the tyranny of gluttony, how great the fickleness of people's minds!... No longer are they zealous for God. All such considerations are thrown aside when their bellies have been filled."¹

Gluttony is a great tyrant. All vices are! They consume us and lead us into false belief! When we think with our bellies, or our feelings, or some other vain ideology, we are setting up either ourselves or else our governing authorities as idols. God's clear Word, the eternal truth, must be the source of how we think, which will inform us how to live as citizens of our country.

Let Christ be Christ. We cannot make him a Bread King. He is the King of Kings. He shows mercy and has compassion on His people which is seen most clearly on a different hillside outside of Jerusalem. For on the cross Jesus gave up His life that by faith we might receive the Bread of Life for our salvation. On this *Laetare* Sunday, we "rejoice with Jerusalem" as we confessed in the Introit (Is 66:10a). We sing along with her, "Let us go to the house of the Lord" (Ps 122:1) for it is here in the Lord's House that our Bread of Life comes to us in His body under the bread, and in His blood under the wine. We share the cup together, having everything in common. And God strengthens and sustains us in both body and soul unto life everlasting, that we might have the liberty to help our neighbor in need.

¹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, John, p. 216.

The Feeding of the 5000 has been recorded for your spiritual comfort. Your Christ will provide all that you need to support your body and life. He does this through all sorts of means; sometimes through the Government, other times through the Church, always through the Word and Sacraments. In Jesus' name, Amen.