

Idol Makers Twenty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time Friday, September 18, 2015
7:30 PM **1 Tm 6:2c-12;** Lk 8:1-3 Healing Mass (No created thing can bring us happiness. We settle for too little and we make idols out of what are actually good things.)

Today we are reading from the First Letter of Paul to Timothy. Many scholars believe that St. Paul was actually dead by the time this letter was authored, but that it is being authored by someone of his school, trained by him, taught by him, so a good disciple.

The issue that is brought up here is how people get stuck in their life. We believe in God. We believe everything is grace. How do we get stuck? Here the author focuses on the love of money. He says, **“The love of money is the root of all evil.”** That’s probably an exaggeration. But the truth is **we can make the love of anything into an idol, a false god.** Now we don’t desire anything that isn’t good, so there is no doubt that everything we desire is good; but we have an infinite desire because we are created with an infinite desire. And **the only possible satisfaction for our infinite desire is God.** And that’s on purpose. God made us that way, that only God can really give us satisfaction, fill our infinite void. But as St. John of the Cross says, **the human heart is an idol maker**—an idol maker. We make idols; that is, we fashion false gods out of things we want. They are all good or we wouldn’t want them. But we make them more than good, more than created. We ask them to serve us as uncreated, in other words, as God. **We ask created things to fill the void, and they cannot.**

St. Thomas Aquinas says there are **four basic false gods**, not necessarily only four, but four basic ones very common to everybody: money, **the love of money**, mentioned here in 1 Timothy. **The love of honor**; honor is good, but to love honor too much is to make an idol out of it. The third one, **the love of power**. Power is good. It can do a lot of good. It is good and can do good. It is something to desire for the common good, but it cannot fill that infinite emptiness within us. And the fourth one is **pleasure**. Pleasure is good, but it cannot bring us happiness. **No created thing can bring us happiness.** That’s why John of the Cross says, *“Nada”*—nothing, no thing—*nada*, because God is *nada—nada* and *todo*, nothing and everything, or **nothing and all. That’s the nature of God.** And we have to keep that in mind, that we get stuck because **we settle for too little and we make idols out of what are actually good things.**

Now this making idols and getting stuck **sometimes becomes so habitual that people can’t change.** Now God can change us of course through his graces, and sometimes that happens. But sometimes the graces of God are deflected because, after all, we are free. **So God, yes, God can do marvels, but only when we allow.** And you notice Jesus sometimes can’t work miracles because people don’t have any faith. So sometimes we are in a real mess, sometimes. And that is why there are times when even being ill or having an accident can turn out to be a blessing, because it changes our habits; it forces us to look at life in a different way, and it just may create an opening for the grace of God to come. **So a good way to deal with our illnesses and burdens and afflictions is to ask God to bring about some good through them.**

Now this can happen in many ways. Several years ago I broke my leg. That was a bad, not good; but it turned out to be a good because, although I was stuck at home and couldn’t do

anything, and that was terrible, but the whole parish came to visit. Every single day at least two people came, and sometimes more than two people. Sometimes a whole family came. And that was such a wonderful experience. Ordinarily, you would say, well, that's pretty bad being laid up for seven weeks. Yeah, it was. But it had something good in it, something redemptive. And so it can be with our afflictions and our problems and our illnesses. **God can use them to bring something good into our lives or the life of someone else.** I have known cases where the serious illness of one person actually broke down walls of enmity, hatred, and indifference that had grown up among the members of the family. This doesn't mean it's good to be sick. It just means that even illness can be used for goodness.

Having said that, I suggest tonight that we pray that everyone who has come here tonight who has brought a burden of any kind, any affliction, any sickness, any shortcoming, any addiction, that we pray and **let us pray for one another that some good will come from whatever it is that besets us**, and that we become willing—willing—to receive the grace that God wants to give us, and that in all things we become more aware of the suffering of others, more compassionate, more patient, toward other people, extending our deepest feelings toward them, **so that even in their weaknesses they feel connected to the human family, to their own family, and most of all to God because, after all, we are the ministers God has sent into the world.**