

Last week's article took up the topic of "leisure." It will be helpful to provide a little summary/reminder:

- Leisure, here, simply means the time not used for obtaining or producing the things needed to sustain physical life. It is non-work time.
- What is it for? What is the purpose of leisure?
 - Rest, yes.
 - Time to do enjoyable pastimes (fishing, watching a movie, visiting, and so on), yes.
 - But the main purpose of leisure is to seek the higher things: true wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. It is time to seek God and what He has revealed, time to come to know Him better.
- God *commands* this sort of leisure time; examples: the 1st & 3rd commandments, a jubilee year.
- This does not mean don't work for what you need. Work and leisure are both commanded by God.

The question we are left with yet is how to do it, how to use leisure for its highest purpose? The first thing is to just choose to have leisure, first and foremost by making the Lord's Day holy. Is Sunday just another work day or just another day to run and do stuff? Start by making Sunday, as our Lord commands, a day away from work, at least to the fullest extent possible. Now of course there is some work that has to be done every day and somebody has to do it. Police and medical personnel are one example and care for livestock is often another. But to the fullest extent possible – not desirable but possible – choose to make the Lord's Day holy.

When speaking of modern living, especially economic structures, Pope St John Paul II repeatedly insisted on the question of: Is this or that practice good for man. Unfortunately contemporary structures or practices frequently seek to usurp the Lord's Day. To some extent, this might be somewhat beyond individual people's control. Nonetheless, choose against it to the fullest extent possible. Avoid unnecessary work on Sundays to the fullest extent possible. We milked at home but that was all the work we did on Sundays. Do what you can to stand against usurpation of Sundays. Make your voice heard whenever possible, including work schedules and certainly sports schedules. Sports can be something good but it is absurd and unacceptable that kids' sports, even for young kids, have now encroached on Sundays. As parents, voice objections to this, and do it for the good of your family. Do not just bow down to the world. Do not think that you have no right to do so, that you have to just go along to get along, well that's what everybody's doing now. Stand up for your family, stand up for what is right and good and true, say no. You not only have the right to do so but the duty to do so. Don't be afraid or ashamed of it. Nothing is ever going to change for the better if people just keep going along with it.

The primary benefit of sports for young people, incidentally, is the development of a good, right, mature mindset, of building wisdom, character, and integrity. I saw a sign in a wrestling locker room once that said: 90% attitude, 10% technique. Every wrestler knows this is true. Having the right mindset – one of fortitude, perseverance, and determination, for example – is the cornerstone of "success" in any walk of life, including fulfilling the true purpose of this life: getting to Heaven. This is tantamount to development of virtue – an habitual way of being. Sports on Sundays is self-defeating because it is contrary to the real good of sports, namely having the right thinking. It acts contrary to that which sports should build up by teaching falsely.

How to practice leisure? #1: insist on having that time, first of all by keeping holy the Lord's Day.

Having a truly good and productive combination of work and leisure will also entail restraint of the appetites. How often do people go, go, go in pursuit of more, more, and more? When does it stop? What is the point? All of these supposedly great material things will be gone in an instant. Having and making good use of leisure will take a change of mindset. Stop and take time to actually think about it. Along with keeping holy the Lord's Day (Sundays) is there an end of the day each day? Make sure there is and make good use of it. And remember: this is for your good and the good of your family. It's not some burden imposed from the outside.

So the first thing about having good and proper leisure is to insist on time for it. But the purpose of leisure is to pursue the highest things – a time for contemplation, a time to pose and think about higher questions, a time to seek wisdom, knowledge and understanding. So how does one go about that? Fr Schall gives an example in his

lecture using the quote from St Gregory Nazianzen (presented last time) – “What benefactor has enabled you to look out upon the beauty of the sky, etc.” Fr Schall says: we should wonder why we are said to be “blessed” with such things. Gregory also mentioned man-made things and Fr Schall said: They [man-made things] obviously refer us to a source not ourselves. [In thinking about this] we realize...they had to be brought forth by a being who had the capacity to create or develop them. But we did not give to ourselves this artistic or craft capacity to make or order things, any more than we created the beauty of the heavens or the countless stars.”

Notice Fr Schall’s use of the word: **WONDER**. Everything he said starts by wondering about things. He looks at stuff – natural or man-made – and says how did it come about, and all of this led him to God, even man-made things. He wonders: how is that man can do such things? He didn’t bring about his own existence and he didn’t give himself these capacities – notice, he’s thinking through his question. This then leads him to the Creator.

So ok, now maybe you’ve finally stopped to take leisure. Then what? Well take time to notice things and then *wonder* about them, as in the example given by Fr Schall. Notice and wonder about what? These can be simple everyday type things that we see all the time – the moon and the stars, for example. This wondering is the first step in seeking real wisdom and understanding. Suppose you’re out planting sometime and you stop the tractor and start wondering, even marveling, at plant growth. In spite of all the scientific know-how or capacity to describe what happens, *why* it happens, what *causes* it, is largely mysterious. As you think about that, it cannot help but lead to the Creator who made it that way. Then you might wonder: how does this reflect Him? What does it tell me about life? To answer that question, you’ll probably have to seek higher sources, ones that tell you about God. There are countless things to wonder about. All of this starts with: stopping the incessant pursuit of stuff, and then taking time to look around and wonder about things and their nature and why they are this way. Just remember that this wonder should lead you in the direction of ultimate truth, which is God.

Perhaps now we can start to see why it is counterproductive for kids to have sports on Sundays. The real good of sports are things like “self-discovery,” discovering real wisdom, growth in character, virtue, and integrity. But this comes about only by having time to wonder. For example, suppose an offensive lineman in football misses a block; maybe it even costs the game. The lineman is now in a time of leisure and he starts to wonder why he missed that block. As he thinks about it, he says to himself: I hesitated. But why did I hesitate? Then he realizes he was controlled, at least momentarily, by fear. Maybe he then even realizes that he does this in other situations; maybe he failed to do what was right at times because he was afraid of what others would think, say, or do. And then he says to himself: I’m not going to do that anymore, I’m going to catch myself and act against fear. And then when he actually does that, he’s grown in the virtue of fortitude; he has matured, made progress towards manhood. Maybe then he even starts to wonder about this thing of fear. Why is it there? Does it have a good use? And now he is seeking real wisdom. But all of this came about because he had leisure time and made the proper use of it. Sports on Sunday for kids is teaching them that leisure is a waste of time, there’s no day set aside for such things. And then the true good of sport is lost.

Does it sound too hard to wonder about things? It’s not hard at all. St Josephine Bakhita stands out as an excellent example. She was captured as a young girl and sold into slavery in Africa. She had no education at all and no knowledge of God or the faith at all. She was often treated very harshly as a slave and yet, in spite of all that, she would look up at the sky and wonder about it, and say: I sure would like to know the person who made all of this. She eventually ended up in Europe, was placed in the care of some nuns, and then became one of the Sisters, where she did in fact finally get to know the Person who made all of that. It’s not hard to stop and wonder about things, you just have to decide to do it.

How to make right use of leisure? In his lecture, Fr Schall used something he read to also wonder about free will. Good reading material is also very helpful in stimulating our wonder. Bishop Sheen said he would always take Scripture with him to his daily Holy Hour and read it until a thought struck him. Then he would put it down and ponder on that thought – he would wonder about what he read. Take time to read something other

than the depressing news of the day or something related to producing more stuff. Read something that will help you wonder about the higher things.

God bless you, Fr Kuhn.