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Taking Aggressive Action

by: Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio



Radio talk show hosts make a living on it. Show after show, they bring before our eyes stupid, unjust and wasteful situations in order to produce outrage. We love to listen and get ourselves all worked up. Our indignation keeps us tuned in and keeps the shows ratings up.

It's easy to focus on the outrageous things that some government official, or some other nation or some dumb yahoo from the next town is doing. It's easy to clamor that this intolerable situation must come to an end **now**. For to say this requires little or nothing from us—our demand is that **others** do something about it, that others mobilize and take action, that others be set straight.

When it comes to confronting **our own** sinfulness and foolishness, we tend to lose the sense of urgency. We procrastinate, make excuses, and change the subject. That's one of the very points that the Lord makes in this Sunday's gospel. "If your hand is your difficulty, cut it off! Better for you to enter life maimed than to keep both hands and enter Gehenna."

The Lord is not encouraging self-mutilation here. He is rather calling for aggressive action, even action that hurts and costs us something precious. Of course, our hands, feet, and eyes are just bodily organs. Of themselves, they can't cause us to sin and damage our relationship with God. But some places that our feet take us, some things we do with our hands, some things we focus our eyes upon, these are the things that are our problem. Going to a particular club may not be in itself sinful, but for a particular person, it may be a near occasion of sin. Every person is a child of God, and nobody is "all bad," but hanging around with certain children of God may present an occasion of sin to us.



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We tend to try to manage it. “I’ll keep my cable subscription, but just not watch that channel.” “I’ll keep surfing the web, but just won’t visit that site.” “I’ll go to the club, but stop after two drinks.”

If it works, great. But when it doesn’t, many of us go on fooling ourselves that it will—the *next* time. We keep trying half-measures, avoiding the necessary treatment because it will sting too much, cost too much.



Jesus says to wake up, get real, and take aggressive action. If the internet is your problem, shut it down. If TV is your problem, turn it off. Better you go through life unplugged and offline than spend eternity in Satan’s chat room.

However, to avoid taking aggressive action against our own personal compromises with the devil, we frequently change the subject. “That miracle can’t be authentic—after all, that faith-healer’s theology is off-base.” “Who do those Muslims think they are railing against abortion when they tolerate suicide bombers?” “How dare those liberals uphold Papal social teaching when they disregard the Pope’s liturgical regulations?” “Those arch-conservatives have no right to talk about the authority of the Council of Trent when they put down Vatican II.”

God is not political. He will welcome virtuous action by anyone, regardless of how imperfect their doctrine, how flawed their character and who they hang around with. “Anyone who is not against me is for me.”

Persistently, he brings us back to the real issue, the issue we want to avoid. He bids us to forget about others’ issues and attend to our own divided hearts, our own hidden hypocrisy, our own little compromises with the devil.

Fortitude, one of the four Cardinal Virtues, is not just about enduring evil and hardship for the sake of doing good. It is also about taking aggressive action against evil. If it is uncomfortable, too bad. If it hurts, so be it. If we see evil in our lives, we mustn’t tolerate it, make excuses for it, and procrastinate. We must pounce on it.



The Seven Deadly Sin

[Dr. Marcellino D’Ambrosio](#)



From about the fifth century, Christian spiritual writers identified seven patterns of sin that, if not broken, would lead to spiritual death. In this fascinating series by Dr. Marcellino D’Ambrosio, we learn the destructive, addictive dynamics of these seven vices and how they infiltrate, and ultimately take over people’s lives. Most importantly, we find out how to get free of the chains forged by these sins and the necessary qualities to cultivate to make us immune to them in the future.

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