

“IT’S 5 O’CLOCK (A.M.) SOMEWHERE” THE VIRTUE OF RISING EARLY

“Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man **healthy, wealthy and wise.**” With respect to the above three adjectives— unquestionably I say “Yes” to #1, afraid not to #2, and the jury is still out about #3! Despite the uncertainty, this proverb was ingrained since my childhood as having lasting value, regardless of one’s financial health and well-being. I have found it to be a most useful adage and one that has in many respects framed my life. But why? Today, the sun rose at 5:38 a.m. One month from today— June 20— will be the longest day of the year (by one second over June 21), when the sun will rise at 5:25 a.m., its earliest of the year. I have always, repeat, always wanted to be up before the sun. Once, while in high school, I slept until 9:15 a.m. (oh, my!) and thought that something was seriously wrong with me! There may still be, but in that case, it was the morning following the last day of school.

Amazingly, the first printed page upon which this adage may be found is entitled *The Treatise of Fishing with an Angle*. This is a treatise on— you guessed it— fly fishing! Its exact provenance is disputed, but it has traditionally been attributed to **Dame Juliana Berners, O.S.B.** Apparently a woman of noble birth (trained in the finer sports of hawking and fishing), she became a Prioress. She is widely credited with writing the first tract on fishing ever published in the English language in 1496 A.D. While not canonized as a nun, she is a 1998 inductee into the **International Game and Fish Association’s Hall of Fame!** Visit www.igfa.org and scroll the link under IGFA. In her treatise on fishing, she cites “an old English proverb,” which while not original to her, conformed with her own views: “Also whoever wishes to go angling must rise early, which is good for man in this way: that is to say, good for his soul for it shall make him holy; and his body healthy by making him whole; also it shall increase his goods for it shall make him rich. As the old English proverb has it: ‘Who rises early shall be holy, healthy, and happy.’”

Is there any virtue in being an early riser, does the practice have any biblical support? “I, Jesus, sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star” (Rev. 22:16). The symbolism here, especially as it is picked up in the **Exultet** of the Easter Vigil is fascinating: “May this flame be found still burning by the Morning Star: the one Morning Star who never sets, Christ your Son...” To do justice though, would take its own column! The psalmist says in Ps 119:154— “Seven times a day I praise you because your judgments are righteous”— a fact not lost upon those responsible for forging the monastic vocation in the Church. Religious Orders such as the Trappists (Cistercians of the Strict Observance) still maintain their centuries old custom of rising at 3:30 a.m. and praying seven times daily in common— Vigils, Lauds, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. This does not even include Mass or private prayer, which is in addition to those seven sung prayers in common!

So, what are the principal advantages of being an early riser? Let me share a few. Have you tried to do your grocery shopping on a Saturday afternoon or Friday after work? As they say in the Bronx— “Fuhgeddaboutit!” The only trouble I encounter at 6:00 a.m. on Saturdays is running into the workers stocking the shelves. Otherwise, I’m in and out in a jiffy. For me, grocery shopping is not social, it is purely functional! Secondly, I do not feel rushed in the morning, and can exercise before leisurely and prayerfully preparing the daily readings for a homily, check the Vatican website or morning news, etc. or phoning others from the Early Riser’s Club.

Most importantly, it is quiet, very quiet! The only sound is that of the coffee grinder, and what a wonderful sound that is! Sure, in the spring there are a few birds chirping, but that has never bothered me. It provides the perfect start to the day because then, and only then, am I able to find quiet. We city dwellers have lost an essential gift of life, either because we have been **unable to find solitude**, or are lost in what to do when we stumble upon it. Solitude provides the framework for making possible an ordered and disciplined life. Ah, there’s that word— discipline, a word that must not be understood in a negative connotation. Rising early provides the discipline needed for hearing the voice of the Lord in the still silence of dawn. This is nothing to fear— we ought to embrace it.

Have you been following the discussions in the Public-school system about start times? Some schools will begin

classes at 9:30 a.m. beginning in the fall. I'd go crazy— I'm starting to think about my mid-morning Cappuccino at that time! The research proffered in favor of late start times for teenagers does not convince me. Why not prepare our kids for the real world, a world in which sometimes the early bird really does get the worm? Later in life, they might even thank us for teaching them the value of an ordered and purposed life. I close with Saint Josemaría Escrivá's teaching on the **Heroic Minute**: "It is the time fixed for getting up. Without hesitation: a supernatural reflection and... up! The heroic minute: here you have a mortification that strengthens your will and does no harm to your body. If, with God's help, you conquer yourself, you will be well ahead for the rest of the day. It's so discouraging to find oneself beaten at the first skirmish."

- A Long Island, NY doctor pleaded guilty to criminally negligent homicide after performing an abortion that resulted hours later in the death of the mother. He admitted that he "failed to provide the woman with appropriate and timely medical attention." The canard that outlawing abortion would lead to "back alley" deaths of women flies in the face of the fact that deaths happen in *legal* abortions, though the real cause for death is often listed as due to other factors other than the abortion procedure itself.
- Cha-ching! The price tag for the proposed 14.5 mile Southwest Light Rail has risen to \$2 billion. That's \$43,000 per foot! A state-of-the-art 40-foot hybrid bus would run you \$500,000, a diesel-electric one perhaps \$665,000. Hmmn, we could purchase 3,000 of these for the cost of the Light Rail. And this \$2B expenditure makes sense because...?
- This Monday, May 21, the newly created *Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church*, will be celebrated for the first time in the Roman calendar. It is to be situated, not on a specific date, but rather on the Monday after Pentecost each year.
- Join us next **Saturday, May 26 at 10:00 a.m.** for the Ordination of four men to the priesthood. This year's class includes Deacon Toulee Peter Ly, a member of Saint Vincent Campus of the Cathedral. Please pray this week for these men as they prepare for their special day. **There is no 8:00 a.m. Mass** preceding the Ordination. Fr. Ly's Mass of Thanksgiving is Sunday at St. Vincent at 9:00 a.m.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector