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We're told there's a sizeable number of people in our society caught up in a cycle of dependency on various things. The Government tells us over three billion pounds was spent last year from the Social Security budget on people with various addictions. That could have been better spent on finding a cure for the coronavirus which has claimed the lives of over 44,000 people to date.

The gospel is also about dependency - not on man-made things but on God Himself. Just as little children rely completely on their parents, so in the same way we must rely solely on God. He can help wrench us away from dependence on things which can do us harm. He says: "come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give rest".

The more we believe in God, the easier it to believe in our own innate giftedness. God has endowed each of us with unique gifts which are meant to be utilised. Remember the parable of the talents. I will be incapable of developing those God-given talents if I fall victim to compulsions of one kind or another. My social media usage, for instance could be getting out of hand and I may even be oblivious to it. If I'm hooked on this, my freedom to develop other talents in my life may be compromised. For instance it's very frustrating for children if a parent is addicted to their smart phone, forever chit-chatting or texting. The children feel left out and will take out their frustration in other ways.

Some people become slaves to sinful habits. When St Augustine turned his back on impure habits, he said the demons taunted him by whispering: 'how can you live without us'? The question we could ask is: what demons can we not live without? Could it be overwork, too much wine, compulsive shopping, or addiction to sports channels or God knows what.

Some time ago we had a lovely talk on 'walking the Camino' which is a 900 mile walk in Spain and can take five or six weeks to complete. There you get away from the topsy-turvey of everyday life and just focus on each day's walk. The man giving the talk said you would be surprised by the number of people after having been through the five week Camino experience, had broken free from things in their lives they thought they could never do without. It was a real tonic for them.

When Jesus said that the mysteries of the kingdom were revealed to mere children, he knew that children find happiness in the simple things of life. I know teenagers like showing off to their peers things they have with designer labels on them which they are often paying over-the-top prices for. By always giving in to them, parents can inadvertently be sowing the seeds of unhealthy needs and wants in their children. The best gift you can give your child is your time, your attention, yourself. The best things in life are free. St Theresa of Avila puts it like this:

Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you, All things pass; God never changes. Whoever has God wants for nothing. He alone suffices.