

## 14A

*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 crippling addictions. That could have been better spent on the NHS.*

The gospel is also about dependency - not on man but on God. 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 take away our liberty and can do us harm.

For instance do we need a digital detox? This specially applies to anyone under 50 especially the young ones. Your phone is your constant companion – it never leaves your side. You spend an excessive proportion of your time on it, preferring to live in the virtual world than the real one! Your obsession with your phone screen could be beginning to impact your relationships AND your sleep. Did you know that 25% of adults don't get enough sleep because of digital devices? It's time to start noticing the effects of your smartphone addiction on your physical and mental health.

Other people become hooked on sinful habits. When St Augustine turned his back on his carnal cravings, he said the demons taunted him by whispering in his ear: 'can you really live without us'? The question we could ask is: what demons can we not live without? Could it be overwork, too much alcohol, compulsive shopping, gambling on my P.C or God knows what.

Some years back here at St Vincent's we had a very enlightening talk on 'walking the Camino' which is a 900 mile walk in Northern Spain and can take five or six weeks to complete. There you get away from the noise and din of everyday life and just focus on each day's walk. What

impressed the leader of the walk more than anything else was the number of people after having walked the Camino who had broken free from things in their lives they thought they could never live without. It was one of the best experiences of their lives.

When Jesus said that the mysteries of the kingdom were revealed to mere children, he knew that children find happiness in the simple things in life. Last Christmas children of one family were asked what they liked best about the day itself. They said taking a short walk through the countryside as a family with their Mum and Dad – no mention of the myriad of presents they got.

I know some youngsters like showing off to their friends their designer label clothes, shoes or other accessories which they are often paying over-the-top prices for. By always giving in to their every whim, parents can inadvertently be sowing the seeds of unhealthy wants in their children. The best things in life are free. The best gift you can give your child is your time, your attention, yourself. 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.*