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It was extolled by the songwriters of the beat generation. It was glamorised in films like Easy Rider. It was the in-thing among the happies of the Sixties generation – a guitar, a motorbike, an open road, a couple riding into the sunset. It was a dropout's paradise. The thing which it extolled would seem to be none other than the old fashioned sin of sloth, a member of the Group known as the Seven Deadly Sins. It may be last on the list but it's by no means the least.

Some people blame others for the lack of opportunity or openings in their lives, but when the gospel says “search and you shall find”, might that not refer to the world of work as much as anything else.

Hall Roach, the Irish comedian, in one of his one-liners, talks about this work-shy Dublin chap who thought that Manual Labour was the Spanish ambassador.

The devil finds work for idle hands, they say. In today's gospel wickedness and laziness go hand in hand? Those who sidestep work often “reap what they did not sow”. Children who shirk work or chores around the house or are given everything on a plate without having to work for any of it may grow up thinking the world owes them something. They're in for a rude awakening.

It was once fondly thought that modern technology by shortening working hours, would leave us free to explore other talents in our arsenal. Evidence suggests, however, that most of us, when we're free, prefer to do nothing. The old protestant work ethic has a lot going for it. Being glued to our smart phones all day can lead to indiscipline, laziness and irresponsible living.

Of course we might be inclined to let ourselves 'off the hook' and say we're always on the go, but could it be just 'chasing our tail', frittering our time away on idle pursuits. Laziness often finds its home in illusion, or a fantasy world far removed from reality.

Psychologists tell us that most of us use only a fraction of our potential. Some beat a hasty retreat from anything which might exploit their potential in other fields. They couldn't be bothered. Work is good for man and we should take pride in it. The talents

which God has given us are not meant to lie fallow as we heard from today's gospel.

Some people mistakenly equate being talented with gifts of the intellect. I remember a boy in our class at school who struggled with reading and writing but when he left school at 14 could strip down a tractor engine in double quick time and put it back together again without any manual of instructions. We were amazed at his knowledge of engines in general without ever formally learning to be a mechanic. Innate talents like his come in all shapes and sizes.

We should affirm each other in our work and encourage people to use the gifts that God has blessed them with. No one need stand empty-handed before the Lord on the Day of Reckoning.