

School Mass

(Notre Dame – 14 year olds)

I was reading an article not long ago where it says there is a sizeable number of people caught up in a cycle of dependency on various things. I've read where 3 to 4 billion pounds was spent last year from the Social Security budget on people with various addictions – nasty things like binge drinking, gambling, anti-depressants). Last night on the telly we heard that the NHS is spending a whopping 14 billion pounds a year on treatment for diabetic patients. That would go down significantly if people changed their overindulgent eating habits and walked a bit each day. Wouldn't that money have been far better spent on people with real illnesses, for instance, cancer patients or sick children, or people with disabilities?

Of course the gospel today is also about dependency - not on man but on God. Just as little children are completely dependent on their parents, so in the same way we must rely solely on God. God can help wrench us away from dependence on things which can do us harm. Jesus says: "come to me and I will give rest to your souls". We have His word for it. Can you think of anything which may rob us of this rest?

The more we believe in God, the easier it to believe in ourselves. God has endowed us with unique gifts which are meant to be used. Think of the parable of the talents. I will be incapable of developing those God-given talents if I lack self-control due to compulsions of one kind or another. We're told these days that it's so easy to become enslaved to your smart phone. One small child in Year 1 recently said to her teacher – 'I hate my Mum's phone and I wish she never had one. It's the worst invention ever'. It's most annoying talking to someone if I keep getting interrupted by my phone. Im sure that's what that little child meant. It can also keep me from establishing real

friendships with others. There is no substitute for face-to-face meetings with others.

A few months ago someone gave a talk in St Vincent's on 'walking the Camino' which is a 900 mile walk in Northern Spain which can take five or six weeks to complete. The person who gave the talk 'walked the walk themselves'. 'There', he said, 'you get away from everything you're normally accustomed to and your mind is freed and relaxed'. You're not allowed to take your smart phone for those six weeks. Now that would be a real penance for a lot of people. You just focus on each day's walk. He said you would be surprised by the number of people who, after those six weeks, have broken free from things in their lives they thought they could never do without. It brought them great relief.

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. Things are often aggressively advertised as 'must have' items for young people such as yourselves. If you can't live without the latest in this or the trendiest in that, then we could inadvertently be sowing the seeds of unhealthy dependencies in our lives later on. Our aim should be to live simple uncomplicated lives. St Theresa of Avila who lived in the 16th century puts her finger on it when she says:

Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you, All things pass; God only is changeless. Whoever has God wants for nothing. God alone suffices.