

Isaiah 40:31 "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint".

Though he be of ancient times, the prophet Isaiah in timeless manner outlines three stages of life that are forever constant; three stages of life that you and I observe, experience in a myriad of ways, in a multitude of contexts, in a mass of situations.

Soar, Sprint and Slog ("schelp").

Soar - they shall mount up with wings like eagles; here is the experience of the human when it is touched by the divine, the mundane by the eternal, the limited by the limitless.

Sprint - they shall run and not be weary; here is the experience of the one inflamed, kindled by the prospect of the new challenge, or consumed with the passion of seeing the end in sight, a task soon to be completed, a project accomplished.

Slog - they shall walk and not faint; oh... here, in a way, is the most challenging, daunting, formidable, intimidating and unnerving of all life's stages. The point where we walk by faith and not by sight, the point where we enjoy neither the excitement of beginning nor the thrill of completion.

The penultimate sentence of Alcoholics Anonymous reads thus, "You will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny".

The book "Alcoholics Anonymous" (the Big Book) speaks of divine intervention, of outpourings of grace, of bestowed moments of clarity. The book speaks of the real possibility of changed lives, new patterns of thought, fresh methods to achieve wisdom and peace.

But this remarkable and life-changing book ends (page 164) with this plain, prosaic, humdrum almost banal sentence "trudge the road of happy destiny" and this is a jolt to many but it is the daily work, the daily walk, the daily word that is the ultimate challenge to a relationship with God, with others and within ourselves; this is the threat to and the arena of healthy recovery; if it does not occur here, it occurs nowhere.

So friends I ask, how's the slog, the trudge along well-worn paths of duty, love, commitment and discipleship? How's it going for you? This I believe is one of the greatest challenge of our lives – to approach the routine and the regular, to encounter the menial and mundane with a sense of God's presence and purpose and passion.

In 1882 John Keble wrote this verse as part of his hymn, "New Every Morning" –

**If on our daily course our
mind
be set to hallow all we
find,
new treasures still, of
countless price, God will
provide for sacrifice.**

**Old friends, old scenes,
will lovelier be, as more of
heaven in each we see;**

**some softening gleam of
love and prayer shall dawn
on every cross and care.**

**The trivial round, the
common task,
will furnish all we ought to
ask:
room to deny ourselves; a
road
to bring us daily nearer
God.**

In today's Gospel (Mark 1) we note the stages of soar, sprint and slog.

Soar – the divine Master visits the home (1:29). And the first time this happens to us, it is an experience of exquisite experience and holy memory.

Sprint – Jesus takes her by the hand (1:30) and power flows from him to the woman, he lifts her up and all are amazed.

But then the slog (1:31) – visited by the Lord, healed by his touch... she resumes the daily tasks but now with an energy, an enthusiasm, an awareness that enables her to walk, to walk, to walk and not to faint.

It's like healing... weddings... sermons (well, actually the "slog" is more the auditor's than the preacher's lot).

Reflect upon it dear friends – the presence of soar, sprint and slog in our lives.

Encouraged by worship, nourished by Sacrament, fed by Scripture and enlightened by prayer... we can expect to enjoy this redoubtable promise...

Isaiah 40:31 “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles (soar!); they shall run and not be weary (sprint) and they shall walk and not faint (slog)”...

O Lord, teach us, help us to wait upon you, to surrender to you and abandon ourselves afresh to your divine providence, purpose and passion.

Please Lord. **AMEN**