

Helping the Unproductive Peoples: A Biblical Basis

BY

Linus G. Akpan
St. Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot Ekpene

Abstract

As Christians we have the obligation to assist even the people who are not productive. When we talk about the dignity of human person what comes to mind first is the image of God (imago Dei) in the person; and we must first of all see Christ in that person. Consequently we serve that person for God's sake irrespective of race and cultural background of the person. Doing charity to people is always obvious in our minds, and among these people are those who are not productive. By unproductive people we mean those who are not able to achieve much in terms of economic endeavors. People belonging to this category depend more or less on others for survival; and such people may include the physically challenged, the aged, the lazy, etc. Jesus Christ loves them and commands us to assist them saying: "when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you" (Luke 14:13-14a). This type of instruction seems burdensome to carry out and this is what motivated this research. Making use of biblical exegetical along with survey, and analytical methods, we come to the conclusion that all must be helped irrespective of social or economic status. In truth we cannot give up on assisting them for charity knows no boundary and with God the impossible becomes possible.

Introduction

As Christians we have the obligation to assist even the people who are not productive. When we talk about the dignity of human person what comes to mind first is the image of God (*imago Dei*) in him or her; we must first of all see Christ in that person. Consequently we serve that person for God's or Christ's sake irrespective of the race and cultural background of the person. Doing charity to people is always obvious in our minds, and among these people are those who are not productive. By unproductive people I mean those people who are not able to produce large amounts of goods, crops, or other commodities; those who are not very useful or able to achieve much in terms of economic endeavors. People belonging to this category depend more or less on others for survival; and such people may include (a) the handicapped, (b) the aged, and (c) the lazy. Though this list is far from being exhaustive, we shall examine the items on the list one after another.

The Handicapped

It is indubitable fact that not all handicapped people are unproductive. Some of the handicapped are skillful and hardworking and able to provide for themselves and their household. We find the skillful handicapped striving in different fields of human endeavor: They are excelling in both white and blue collar jobs. In white collar jobs they occupy important positions and are highly competent and efficient in their offices. In blue collar jobs they are so industrious and productive such that people always go for their services or products. The handicapped of this category have the competitive spirit. Right from their childhood they attract more attention, love, and care from parents, members of the family, neighbors, and teachers.

Every person around them finds himself or herself in empathy with them and are always ready to help. The handicapped of this class do not allow themselves to be weighed down by their physical misfortune or entertain self-pity, rather they always want to do better than others. While in the school they do not leave the competitive spirit behind, and they would always want to excel in their academic performance. The anxiety of their future career spurs up people around them to relentlessly assist them to succeed. The spirit of helping the handicapped is identifiable with the Annang people, who always earn high commendations in this respect.

On the other hand, they are handicapped people who are not productive in terms of economic endeavors and as such cannot sustain themselves. That is to say, they depend on others for their livelihood. Since they depend on others for their livelihood individual persons and organizations have the obligation to care for them. That other handicapped people are not productive may be attributed to the seriousness of their physical disabilities. It is by providing for people such as these that benefactors demonstrate their love of God through services to neighbors. Jesus Christ loves them dearly and commands us to assist them saying: “when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you” (Luke 14:13-14a). Considering the urgency and seriousness of the issue at stake Jesus gives us a command. Without mincing words he uses the Greek, *kalei* (imperative present active 2nd person singular of the verb, *kaleō*, meaning, call, name, address, invite) to show that we have no option but to do what he commands us to do. By implication it is not enough that we invite only the upper-class peers or those who have the ability to repay us, we must also invite the *ptōchos*, *the poor*, *the pitiful*, *the inferior*, *orthose who have nothing*, to our celebrations.¹ In other words, we must not give only to those we expect to get something from in return, we must also be open handed to the *ptōchos*. It is only in this way that we shall earn the *makarios* (blessedness; happiness) pronounced by Jesus on those who obey this command (cf. Luke 14:14).

The Aged

It is indeed clear in the human mind that if God blesses a person with long life, at a certain stage he or she will get feeble and die. Getting weak under the burden of years is what all persons, even those who will not make it to old age, become afraid of and prepare for. The psalmist captures this stage of human life very well when he says, “our span is seventy years or eighty for those who are strong. And most of these are emptiness and pain. They pass swiftly and we are gone” (Psalm 89:10). The point of emphasis here is “and most of these are emptiness and pain.” These emptiness and pain make man incapable of doing those things he loved to do. Jesus Christ made this point crystal clear to St. Peter saying: “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walk where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will gird you . . .” (John 21:18). It is obvious that when we get old we mostly depend on others, that is to say, we need the assistance and services of others. At this stage of life also we become much less productive in terms of economic

¹ Also, Jesus gave this teaching to correct what was going on in the society of his own day. “There is evidence that during Jesus’ time both Jewish and Greco-Roman society spurned these unfortunate people, for example, the Qumran Scroll lists the following people as those forbidden entry to the . . . banquet: those who are afflicted in flesh, crushed in feet or hands, lame, blind, deaf, or dumb; those who suffer from defective eyesight or senility.

endeavors. Pondering on the evening time of his life, man starts to imagine how his life would look like. He then works hard to save for this stage of his life.

Among other things a person works hard to marry a wife or husband in order to have a support in his or her old age. Having a support in his or her old age becomes a reason and actually gives the impetus to parents to invest more in their children. By investing more in their children they are not only preparing for the future of their children, but also for the evening time of their life. After training and educating their children, the parents now see and really perceive them as their future hope. The hope consists in the fact that the children in turn will care for them in their old age. It is a truism that “the care for the aged parents is natural and in response to the parental affection enjoyed in the childhood and teenage years. It is crystal clear that when children are new in the world parents care for them; and in the same vein, when parents get old children care for them. This is a true paradox of life. This interpersonal relationship constitutes a scenario where life is experienced as interdependent” (Akpan 2015: 19). Deliberating extensively on the fourth commandment, Jesus ben Sirah wisely addresses children in relation to their aged parents as follows: “My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives. Even if his mind fail, be considerate with him; revile him not in the fullness of your strength. For kindness to a father will not be forgotten, it will serve as a sin offering it will take lasting root. In time of tribulation it will be recalled to your advantage, like warmth upon frost it will melt away your sins. A blasphemer is he who despises his father; accursed of his Creator, he who angers his mother” (Sirach 3:12-16).

Some parents work as civil servants to save some money for their social security or pension from which they will benefit during their retirement age. Others who are self-employed in various ways while they are still full of energy work extra hard to buy more plots of land, economic trees like oil palms, cocoa farms, or build houses for rent in the cities in preparation for their retirement age. Annang men are known for these types of enterprise because they always talk about life and death, and as a result project their minds into the future and work for it.

Though man in his old age may have all the resources to sustain him during the evening time of his life, he will still need somebody or people around him. This is because he may not be strong enough to go to the bank alone to do some transactions, farm to do some work, or cities to collect rents from his tenants. It is time for him to fall back on his investments; and in a sense part of those investments are his or her children. It is now time for the children to fulfil their obligations of the fourth commandment which says: “Honour your father and your mother, as the Lord, your God, has commanded you, that you may have a long life and prosperity in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you” (Deut 5:16).

It becomes clear that taking care of one’s parents especially aged parents is not optional, but obligatory because it is a command. The command has now become a responsibility that a child cannot shift to another person. Trying to manipulate or shift the responsibilities due to parents is an offense in the sight of God, and it is sinful. This is what Jesus warned the Jews against when he says: “You disregard God’s commandment but cling to human tradition. How well you have set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition! For Moses said, honor your father and your mother . . . Yet you say, if a person says to father or mother,

‘any support you might have had from me is *korban*,’² you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother. You nullify the word of God in favor of your tradition” (Mark 7:8-13). We must face the reality instead of sinning against God.

In taking care of our aged parents a child can only show appreciation for what he or she received from the parents, for the child cannot pay back what he or she received from them. In responding to the needs of the parents a child must not do it as if he is forced to do it. He should rather do it with freedom accruing from love – love response to God for the gifts of parents. In taking care of the parents he or she does everything for them for God’s sake, translating his transpersonal love for God into interpersonal love for his parents. In reality “we need to encourage everyone to feel a responsibility toward taking care of their elderly parents. . . . It should be anticipated that the day will come when it will be necessary to do this, as it probably will be for each of us to be taken care of by sons and daughters, nieces and nephews, in-laws, or other relatives in the future (Canon & Canon 2014: 156).”

Aged parents love to stay in the environment they have been used to. Taking them to a new environment upsets them a lot. In the western countries some children love to care for their aged parents in nursing homes, while others do so in old people day care facilities. But some parents whose memories are still very sound would not want to stay there, they rather prefer to stay in their homes. Sharing with the public his concern on caring for the elderly people, Ben Carson says:

“Unfortunately, the proliferation of nursing homes and elder care facilities in our society indicates that many families are reluctant to exercise enough compassion to care for their own parents and relatives. In some cases people must work outside the home to earn a living and have relatives who cannot be left alone, and these cases are understandable, but those who expect others to care for their parents and don’t even visit them should remember that these people took care of them when they could not care for themselves. . . . In cases where the problem is due more to circumstances rather than lack of character, we need to work together to find solutions. The task of providing full-time care for the elderly or disabled has become progressively more difficult in families where everyone is working outside the home and no one can be full-time guardian for the persons in need. . . . The importance of caring for one’s own remains unchanged, and our society needs to create new ways of doing this. In some ways, this is already happening. A whole new industry known as adult day care arose because of this necessity . . . a stimulating and safe environment for millions of elderly and incapacitated individuals” (Canon & Canon 2014: 155.

In African setting particularly among the Annang people aged people are mostly cared for in their homes. Sometimes their children may decide to take them to the cities where they

² The Greek, *korban*, is a transliteration of the Aramaic, *qorban*, meaning, offering or gift. The recipient of the gift is God, a son could remove any claim on it that his aging parents might have. Jesus maintains that the result of the *korban* practice is to deprive parents of benefit from their son’s property, thus constituting an infringement of the commandment. What looks like pious behaviour is actually a way of circumventing religious obligation, which is sinful.

live, at first the aged parents may feel excited when they first learn of the decision, but after staying with their children for some time they become nostalgic. When the homesickness is so devastating the children cannot but return them home. In Annang culture aged people are cared for by all. In other words, it is not only the biological children who care for their parents, people from the vicinity and even from distant places lend a helping hand to caring for the old people. This is because in Annang culture an aged person is not only a parent to his or her biological children, but also to all young people. Respecting parents according to the fourth commandment is not only responsibility towards biological parents, it is also applicable to the elderly people. It is pertinent to note that “besides the virtues that must characterize our conduct toward God, special duties toward our neighbor are enjoined.”³ It is always clear that a person other than oneself is a neighbor. In this regard it is not only one’s biological parents who are one’s neighbors, but also other elderly people to whom one owes respect as one would one’s biological parents. In other words, we must extend the respect which we owe to our biological parents to other elderly men and women. In Annang culture we learn this virtue right from our childhood by helping an elderly woman to carry firewood, weed her farm and sweep around her hut, and fetch water from the stream for her. Assisting the elderly people is both collective and individual responsibility; and it is done with all amount of pleasure. We must not think of them in terms of productivity, but in terms of the love we have for them.

The Lazy

The term in itself is derogatory because it does not speak well of a person of whom it is used. It is an adjective that ruins the personality of a person instead of edifying it. The Greek word, *óknēros*, which means, *lazy, troublesome, irksome, or slothful*, says everything about it. If any or all of these adjectives is used of a person, he or she has a lot of work to do in order to improve himself or herself. The word, *lazy*, is used of a person who has a little will to work or a person who stays idle. A lazy person is he who lazes about without doing any work, that is to say, he or she passes time in idleness. Absolutely, nobody would love this adjective to be used of him or her, but in reality we do have such people. “Laziness or sloth is a mortal sin if and when it results in the breaking of a commandment; . . . it is also mortally sinful when it results in harm to others (Altwater 1949: 468).” How does a lazy person feed on daily basis? Shall we allow him or her to die of hunger because he or she is not productive? Obviously, every human society has this problem. Then, how do we collectively and individually go about it?

What does St. Paul mean by this statement, “For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: if anyone does not work, let him not eat” (2 Thess 3:10). This statement is more of disciplinary measure than total denial of food to a lazy person. This text cannot be understood in isolation of the rest of the unit. In order to understand what St. Paul means by this statement we shall take the whole unit of 2 Thess 3:6-15, and briefly investigate its background, examine the *sitzimleben*, try to exegetically analyse it, and then draw a conclusion. Scholars are not unanimous in the title given to the text of 2 Thess 3:6-15. Among others some scholars tag it, “Exhortation to the disorderly,” others entitle it, “neglect of work,” still others

³ Footnotes on the Book of Sirach 3:1-16 in New American Bible (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1991), 773.

name it, “discipline in brotherly love.” All these titles play vital roles in the exegetical analysis and understanding of the text.

Background of the Text

St. Paul wrote his second letter to the Christian community of Thessalonica in response to the problem of misunderstanding his first letter and the deepening crisis amongst them. According to Robert K. Jewett, “in response to misunderstandings of this first letter and a deepening of the crisis, Paul writes 2 Thessalonians in the deliberative genre, reproving misconceptions about new age and demanding strenuous responses to the congregation’s troublemakers” (Jewett 2013: 1412). The misunderstanding centres on Paul’s teachings on eschatology of which some misconceive as being realized already: “they felt that the new age was fully present and thus that death had been abolished and bodily responsibilities lifted” (Jewett 2013: 1414). The misunderstanding was unfortunate and very far from Paul’s traditional teaching on eschatology. Deliberating on the nature of that misunderstanding Jewett contends that “the writing of 2 Thessalonians very soon afterward indicates that the congregation still fail to grasp the ‘already/not yet’ scheme of Pauline eschatology. They misinterpreted the first letter as if Paul actually taught that ‘the day of the Lord has already come’ (2 Thess 2:2), a conclusion so bizarre that Paul wondered whether forgery had occurred” (2 Thess 2:2, 15, 3:17, see also Jewett 2013: 1414)). If the misinterpretation of the first letter had been left unchecked then the missionary efforts of St. Paul in Thessalonica would certainly not yield the desired result. Those to whom the accusing finger points of being responsible for the misinterpretation, teaching, and spreading of the wrong doctrine was a group of people known as the *atakttoi*, *the disorderly ones*, who did not live their life according to the Pauline Christian tradition (Church 1961: 1885).⁴ Paul writes the second letter in order to reinstate his authentic teaching on eschatology, discipline the disorderly ones, and help them to live according to authentic Pauline tradition.

Social Situation of the Thessalonian Christian Community

In Thessalonica most of Paul’s converts were Greek handworkers and tradesmen, who used to worship Cabirus, a god whom they believed to be the benefactor of handworkers and protector of the city. The extraordinary response of the peasants to Paul’s proclamation of the crucified and resurrected Christ as an apocalyptic benefactor may reflect the religious vacuum that had been created by the co-optation of the Cabirus cult (Jewett, p. 1413). Paul’s proclamation of the Good News to them so bound them together in a new Christian family, a family similar to the post-Pentecost Day Christian family in Jerusalem where everything was shared in common amongst the disciples (cf. Acts 2:42-47). The members of Thessalonian Christian community were so bonded in love such that Paul referred to them as people being taught by God himself, (*theodidakttoi*) for the sole purpose of brotherly love (*philadelphia*). In fact, “the rule of a love feast cited in 2 Thess 3:10 reveals the development of a system in which the regular evening meal was provided by contributions from the members rather than being provided by patrons. This is also reflected in 1 Thess 4:9-12, which centers on ‘brotherly love,’

⁴ There were some who walked disorderly, not after the tradition they received from the Apostle[Paul],”

implying that Christians are in some sense living together as a new fictive family. . . . The sharing of resources and feeding the poor are being accomplished here by a Christian form of brotherly love (Jewett, p.1414).

The majority of the Thessalonian Christian community was free citizens of low social status who worked very hard to earn a living on daily basis, and who, from their meagre resources, contributed to the community's common evening meal. Being aware of their economic struggle, Paul decided not to be a burden to them saying, "for you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, we did not eat anyone's bread without paying, but with toil and labour we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you" (2 Thess 3:7-8). If Paul and his companion worked hard to avoid being a burden to the community neither would they allow the disorderly people to be a burden to the poor community, which consisted of low income earners. If the disorderly people were the members of the community and feeding on the food produced by the community by way of contribution, they also had the corresponding duty of making their contributions to the community. But they enjoyed the free meals without making their contributions. St. Paul disapproved of this type of behavior and opted for punitive measures and corrections. However, the disorderly brothers were not to be treated as enemies cut off from all contacts, but to be allowed to continue in a brotherly status. Consequently, lines of communication were kept open for continued warnings about their morally unacceptable behavior (Thomas 1978: 336).

Exegetical Analysis

The lazy ones were allowed to continue as members of the Christian community, but not without some disciplinary measures and corrections. Since love is the culture of Christians we do not expect Christians to act like pagans. According to Robert Thomas, "the Thessalonians dealt firmly yet charitably with the mistakes of their brothers. Anyone refusing to comply with the work ethic set out in this letter was not to be associated with, so that he might be ashamed of his behavior. He was not to be expelled from the Church like the sinning brother referred to in 1 Corinthians 5. In Corinth the offense was so flagrant as to bring disrepute on the whole Church. In Thessalonica, however, the lapse was not yet so aggravated as to bring the reproach of the pagans on the Church. Here the erring brother was allowed to continue in the meetings . . ." (Thomas 1978: 375). In our Christian context our erring brothers or sisters do not deserve absolute denial of goodness, rather they need some punitive measures and corrections. Let us have a cursory look at the text of 2 Thess 3:6-15:

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, we did not eat any one's bread without paying but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you. It was not because we have not that right, but to give you in our conduct an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If anyone will not work, let him not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their

work in quietness and to earn their own living. Brethren, do not be weary in well-doing (RSV, Catholic Edition)."

In the context of our discussion the statement that draws so much attention in the text consists in verses 10 and 11: "For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If anyone will not work, let him not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work." This statement implies that Paul himself knew about the laziness of the disorderly ones while he was with the community in Thessalonica, this might be the reason he earlier handed down the command of "no work no food."⁵ Now, Paul who had left Thessalonica but still had the complaint about the laziness of the disorderly ones, and decided to put his exhortation and command into writing (at Corinth where he was), and sent to them (Thomas, p.301). According to Jewett, "the *atakttoi*, the disorderly ones, abandoned their occupations and were being supported by the congregation; they resisted order on principle. This situation worsened over time (Jewett, p.1414)." If the problem of the disorderly ones was there when Paul was in Thessalonica and still persisted and even growing worst while he was in Corinth, it might imply that the disorderly ones were still depending on the contributions of the community. It might be that the community could not altogether refuse food to the disorderly ones because they (members of the community) were living in brotherly love as "taught by God." Whether the community was still feeding them was of no import to Paul, what was of concern to Paul was the implementation of the prescribed discipline by the members of the community - "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us" – and the acceptance of the correction by the disorderly ones – "now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living. Brethren, do not be weary in well-doing."

In all, it shows that there is a "linkage between manual labor, eating, earning bread for the community, and brotherhood; also found in this text is the rule about not feeding persons refusing to work, which ends with the admonition, 'brothers, do not be weary of doing good.' The 'good' in this instance is not some euphemism about general responsibility; in this context it refers to supporting the community whose life is centered on a love feast, a feast that depends on the contributions of each member (Jewett p.1415)." Here we shall pay more attention to the linkage between working and eating. These two words, work (*ergazomai*) and eat (*esthio*) are like two sides of the same coin. Whatever type of work a person engages in, be it skilful or unskilful, helps the person to feed; and on the other hand, the mind of a person who consumes is directed to becoming more productive in order to sustain himself or herself. Naturally, a person who produces must eat, and a person who eats must produce. So, denying food to a person who is productive is against the law of nature. That a person who produces must eat has so been ordained by God; and that is why we are obliged to pay a poor laborer before sunset (cf. Deut 24:15).

⁵ It is pertinent to note that "from a very early time denying food to the lazy was a traditional form of discipline in the Church," Robert L. Thomas, "2 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 334. Denying food to the lazy is also natural to different human cultures.

Nevertheless, when the unfortunate happens that a person consumes without producing, we try to carry him or her along for the sake of God and of brotherhood. If we fail to do this he or she will die of hunger. According to the saying of a wise man, “laziness plunges a man into deep sleep, and the sluggard must go hungry” (Prov 19:15). Denying food to a person who does not produce can only be for a while as a corrective measure, or else the life of the person will be in jeopardy. St. Paul knows about this and that may be the reason he exhorts the disorderly persons to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living; and not be weary in doing what is good. Definitely, if the disorderly persons heed Paul’s instruction, become productive, and send their contributions to the community the problem will cease to exist. This simple discussion tells us that St. Paul in his command does not mean total denial of food to the lazy. It is rather unfortunate that up to our own time people most often misunderstand the text of 2 Thess 3:10. As Christians we have the obligation to sustain even the lives of those who do not merit it. All these are about dependency and the manner we treat the dependent. It is true that “we cannot empower people who are dependent. That is why most empowerment initiatives do not work” (Covey 2013: 280). But history cannot always follow the same course; in this context it is all about grace, mercy, and charity.

Conclusion

People who are not productive and as a result are economically dependent on the industrious cut across human cultures globally. The dependency can be seen in the relationship between husband and wife, child and parents, brother and brother, sister and sister, nephew and uncle, niece and aunt, etc. They are dependent on others not because they are sick, handicapped, or lack the capacity to work, but because they are lazy. They are lazy and non-productive economically because they fail to engage in different kinds of activity whether in the modern industrial society or agrarian rural society; be it in form of intellectual activity, manual activity, industrial activity, social services, etc (Ukpong 1993: 105). Here, it is pertinent to note that our discussion does not include unemployment and those who do not have jobs.

It is an observable fact to note that laziness can hardly be a permanent state in life. For instance, a man may work very hard to marry a wife and after marrying her he becomes a drone; and gradually he starts to depend on the wife. Instead of being the bread winner of the family, the wife now sees herself doing everything as the bread winner of the family. The wife may get fade up with this type of arrangement and even from time to time deny him meals. But can the wife deny him food *in toto*? No. I believe that out of sympathy and love she will continue to feed him. Another case may be seen in the relationship between a son and parents. The parents provides everything necessary to help him complete his education but he drops out of school. Then they help him to learn a trade, but he would not do it. The parent assist him to find a job that suits his status, but he would not work. Lastly, the parents put him on a business line, but he squanders both the profits and capital. Consequently, the son becomes totally dependent on the parents, and they continue to provide for all his needs. Will the parents stop caring for him because he is so much a burden to them? By no means! For the love of bringing a child into the world and for the obligation of feeding, clothing, housing, and training a child whom they brought into the world, they will certainly continue to care for him. But will the parents be there for him forever? This is a question we cannot answer. Most people would rather refer to such a child as good for nothing.

In fact, all kinds of derogatory adjective and noun would be used to describe him: he would be seen as being stubborn, radical, a vagabond, rogue, criminal, rascal, beggar, etc. People would shun him and distant themselves from him, because to them he is an outcast. All these descriptions used on a truant of this sort fit the descriptions which some Italians of the nineteenth century used on the boys gathered together, trained, and reformed by St. John Bosco. For John Bosco background check on boys was not an issue before admitting them into the community of boys under his control. Like our Lord Jesus Christ John Bosco started working on those boys whenever and wherever he met them. And as a result his love and sacrifice for the boys paid off and most of them became formidable responsible people in the Italian society. In sum, St. John Bosco was happy for what God had used him to achieve and the boys were happily grateful to God and the Saint. In cases like these how can we apply the injunction of “no work, no food?” Here we can only punish and correct, but if the punitive measures and corrections are of no avail, in mercy and love we cannot stop caring for lazy people. In truth we cannot give up on them for charity knows no boundary; and with God the impossible becomes possible.

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