

Homily
Memorial of Saint Leo the Great,
Pope and Doctor of the Church
November 10, 2023

Pope Saint John XXIII, when asked ‘how many people work at the Vatican,’ said, “About half.”

We really shouldn’t be too angry with lazy people because they didn’t do anything.

On last night’s episode of *Gutfeld!*, panelist Jamie Lissow, a comedian, shared a story about when he was asked to roast his fellow employees at his company’s Christmas party. One of his targets was known to not work very hard, and he used this in his act, making fun of his laziness. That employee was fired the next day. I don’t know if that is a true story.

I’ve heard that most people are most productive the days just before going on vacation and the days just following their return. How productive would we be if treated every day as if it was the day just before going on vacation?

And what about working smart and not hard? How much more productive would we be if we approached our work load creatively and logistically? How many of us would be able to justify our day by how productive we are? And how are we at setting our priorities. I’m really good at getting things done, but those things are often not the most important items on my list.

The rich man’s steward was not too productive, even going so far as to squander his master’s property. When called to task, he realized he had to do something if he didn’t want to become a digger or a beggar. He got busy and worked smart, if only to avoid a miserable end.

Pope Leo I, also known as Saint Leo the Great, the first “Great” and the first pope to be named Doctor of the Church, was a deacon when he was elected Pope in the year 440. Deacons are known for their ministry of charity, as servants of the people of God. As Pope, he was known as the servant of the servants. He was known for his negotiation and moderating skills, meeting with and stopping Attila the Hun. He wrote many sermons and letters, many of which have survived to this day, many excerpts included in the Roman Office of Readings. He is known for his works of mercy, encouraging almsgiving and charitable efforts towards those in need. He fought against many heresies of the day, including Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Manicheism and Pelagianism, not to mention many other unpronounceable-isms. He was known as one of the best administrative popes of the ancient Church. His work branched into four main areas, indicative of his notion of the pope’s total responsibility for the flock of Christ.

Saint Leo the Great was a busy and productive pontiff. He worked both hard and smart, accomplishing many great things in his 21 years as pope and throughout his entire life. Can we say the same? We don’t have to run an organization like the church or a major company or state or county. But we can run our lives to the best of our ability. We are called to take the gifts God has given us and use them in loving and productive ways. When we don’t, we can always choose to make a change, and we can make that decision every morning when we get up, thank God for the gift of our life and return ourselves back to Him, by selflessly loving our neighbor as ourself.