

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sister or father or mother or children or land for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. Being born of a noble family Saint Aloysius Gonzaga was given many gifts, much of his upbringing consisted of training in politics and war. However the seedy life of the renaissance Italian court repulsed him, and he felt a desire for something more, something deeper. He found this in a deep devotion to Christ. It is for this devotion and zeal that we remember him.

St. Gonzaga exemplifies the zeal with which we should live as Christians. He left behind earthly nobility and freedom that was his right in order to pursue heavenly kingship and true freedom. Aloysius, although only twenty three when he died, saw more clearly than many men his senior the worthlessness of the things of this earth when compared to the glories of heaven. Laying down his arms as a noble trained for war, he embraced prayer and asceticism as more potent weapons. He did all those things because he saw that in every way the spiritual is greater than the material, so by abandoning his noble status St. Gonzaga was not losing anything, rather he gained Christ and therefore gained a hundredfold.

It can be tempting for all of us to choose this world over the world to come and justify our choice by arguing that the comforts we allow ourselves are prudent and proportioned, and while we do need rest and even entertainment it is too easy to embrace our comfortable lot in life and thereby lose sight of our true homeland, the only source of real comfort. We deserve nothing. Everything we are given whether they are necessary or superfluous is given to us from heaven. We should remember that these things are there to point us back to heaven. It was this reality that St. Gonzaga saw most clearly, and caused his great thirst for the next world and remorse for not pursuing it more adamantly.

This thirst should not just lead us to a deeper prayer, but also to a change in our actions. St. Gonzaga had to fight in order to live as he felt he should, it was out of his love of Christ that caused him to abandon his high status and subject himself to a life of poverty and obedience. It was in this context of poverty and obedience that St. Gonzaga found himself helping victims of a plague that struck Rome during his novitiate. He served these people despite his repulsion to their condition. When we see the goodness of the spiritual world we gain the ability to do things in this world that would repulse us, not out of a sense of duty, but rather out of a love of the Living God and trust in his promises. We see that to serve the poor is to serve our King in heaven, who can give greater rewards for our service than any earthly king.