

Homily for 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In the 1940's Michael Dowling was president of one of the largest banks in Minnesota, a father of five, and U.S. Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year. Because of his success he was often called upon to speak to soldiers during World War II.

On one occasion he was asked to go to Europe to visit a group of wounded soldiers in London. He spoke to a large group of bedridden men who had lost eyes, legs, arms. He tried to minimize their wounds and told them that instead of feeling sorry for themselves they should start planning what they wanted to do with their lives. The soldiers responded by yelling, booing and throwing whatever they could at him.

In response Michael tried to speak in a stronger voice. The soldiers responded by yelling obscenities at him. Finally he sat down on a chair and took off his right leg. The soldiers calmed down a bit but they still resented him. Then he took off his left leg. The booing stopped. Then he took off his right arm and finally flipped off his left hand. Now...now they listened to him.

When Michael Dowling was 14 he was a victim of a terrible accident which caused the loss of most of his limbs. But he was

determined. He never let it stop him from going after his dreams. He never made an excuse.

But we make excuses. We make excuses about a lot of things. We make excuses because we don't want to do something. We make excuses because we don't believe we can do something. We make excuses because we don't want to commit ourselves...to anything. We make excuses because we have already done our part and don't need to do it again. We even make excuses for not living the life that Christ asks of us. We hear Him calling us to be disciples but we have other things we need to do...we want to do...are too important for us to put aside. Something is always going on that gives us the excuse we need to get out of whatever is being asked of us.

Jesus was right – once you put your hand to the plow you just can't look back. If you do, you'll end up going nowhere. If we believe that God is on our side and that God walks with us, than why do we make excuses? God invites us to take the first step, to not look back and to keep going.

There are always a thousand reasons why we shouldn't but there are just too many Michael Dowlings who show us how foolish we are and how little faith we have. If we can dream it, if we can embrace

God's invitation, it will happen. Let's put our hand to the plow and stop looking back.