

Last week I saw a story about Ben Sasse, former Senator from Nebraska and former President of the University of Florida. He announced on X that he has stage-four pancreatic cancer. In his own words, within a few weeks or months he's "gonna die." I don't know Sasse, or that much about him. But he has been in national policy debates, and I've read some of his ideas about current events. But for some reason his particular story hit home. What struck me forcefully that day is how much his life and the lives of his family and their priorities might have changed in the single moment upon hearing the diagnosis.

I know there are many business leaders, managers, and administrators in the parish. I assume you have been through countless management seminars and workshops. I have also attended some of those put on by the archdiocese in the hopeless attempt to make me into a competent administrator. One trick I do

remember must now be seen as an ancient technique. I'm talking about the Eisenhower Quadrant Matrix.

The story goes that in 1954 President Eisenhower, former Allied Commander in World War II and organizing genius, spoke about this technique on how to organize one's priorities. There are two axes – one running from urgent to not urgent, the other, from important to not important. The idea is that we should graph all our tasks to one of the four quadrants. The urgent and important need to be done right away. The important but not urgent should be scheduled. The not important but urgent tasks should be delegated, and the not important and not urgent can be ignored. I may have that slightly wrong (like I said, I'm no administrator), but it's the general idea.

I bring all of this up because today is Epiphany, and we hear the story of the magi's journey to adore the newborn King. What I want to focus on today is how the wisemen are examples of an openness and readiness to obey God's Truth. They acted with urgency when

the coming birth of the Messiah was announced. The Greek says when they saw (the star), “eidomen” they came, “Aelthomen.” In those two words is a spiritual program of life: when they saw – discerned what God wanted, they immediately acting on His will. The journey may have been long, several years even, but they set out upon seeing the star.

And last week we had the story of the Holy Family’s Flight into Egypt. This time it was Joseph who acted with a great sense of urgency, rising in the middle of the night and hastening his family south to escape Herod’s men. I would even go back into Advent and the story of Mary’s Visitation to Elizabeth. When the angel Gariel left her, Mary went “in haste” to the hill country of Judea to help Elizabeth, whom the angel had told her was pregnant.

My point is that in the Christmas Story we have these examples of God’s chosen ones acting with speed and urgency when they discern God’s will. Think here of Eisenhower’s Quadrants: in his

terms they are people know that God's business is always urgent and important and they act accordingly.

I think of Ben Sasse. Again, I know almost nothing about him, although I said a prayer for him and his family when reading his news. And maybe everything is in order in his spiritual life. His post on X certainly showed a Christian response to the situation. But with many of us, I can't help but assume the quadrant of priorities in our minds would suddenly shift dramatically. I'm afraid that if/when we receive that news the urgent and not urgent in our own lives will radically scramble.

That's because God is not urgent in our lives.

For most of us, if we were to plot God and His business with us – and ours with Him -- on the four-quadrant matrix He would come out as, at best, important but not urgent – something to schedule for the future. For many of us, frankly, God would even be labeled

(practically, if not theoretically), as not important and not urgent - ignorable.

In a Christmas homily he once preached, Pope Benedict XVI said, “The faster we move, the more efficient our time-saving devices become, the less time we have. And God? The question of God never seems urgent. Our time is already completely full.”

So, in our daily lives -- what is keeping us from those 20 minutes of daily prayer, reading that Catholic app, attending daily mass, or volunteering? Are those things and activities we put in their place all that more important and urgent? What is keeping us from worshipping at mass every weekend as God desires? Are those things as important and urgent as the Eucharist? Obviously, at one level they are more to us at the moment – or they wouldn’t be filling up the time we should be giving to the urgent task of our relationship with Jesus.

What if we were told tomorrow that we have only weeks to live?

We would be shocked, certainly and naturally. But, imagining the moment after the doctor leaves the room – what do you think would be the first thing you would resolve to change in your life in the time you have left? Why don't we begin that change now?

When the Wisemen saw, they came. They are a great reminder for us – when we know what God wants of us, let us get on our camels and head out. Doing the will of God is always urgent and important.