

About two weeks before I left for Africa, Father Aloysius emailed me from Uganda with heartbreaking news: he had just been swindled out of \$20,000. This is a guy whose salary is about a dollar a day. He spends part of his life getting donations for his ministry, so when a friend told him he received a grant for \$480,000 to build an orphanage, it sounded too good to be true. It was too good to be true. But Father Aloysius put up \$20,000 of donated funds in order to receive the greater sum, and got swindled out of all of it. There is no orphanage, there is no grant, there are only con men. Three individuals were involved in the scam. The police caught one of crooks, but he would not divulge the names of the others. He didn't have any of the money either – so he said. Father Aloysius says the police will probably release this man as soon as they receive a large enough bribe. That is how justice is handled on the streets of Kampala, Uganda.

I brought him about \$2000 that you contributed, and he is very grateful for your support, especially now. Adding to my anxiety on this trip, I had that gift in cash in various denominations because to wire it would have cost some money, and you can get a better rate of exchange with cash. Still, there were challenges. When we went to the exchange bureau in Kampala, I learned they would not accept \$100 bills older than the year 2000, and they gave a lower rate of exchange for \$20s, 10s and 5s. So even with cash in hand, you don't always get what you want.

You would think somebody like Father Aloysius should have it a little easier. He's a decent man and a devoted priest. He is dedicated to the people in his parish and he respects his family. He has visited us twice, and he asks about many of you by name. But even people who dedicate their lives to God amid overwhelming hardships have to put up with obstacles. They come with the territory.

Today's responsorial psalm was written by someone who struggled with obstacles. It was written by blue collar workers who labored well and hard, but got little results, servants whose masters treated them with contempt and mocked them for the few mistakes they made. It goes, "Have pity on us, O Lord, for we are more than sated with contempt; our souls are more than sated with the mockery of the arrogant, with the contempt of the proud. Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy."

You will face obstacles even when you do the right thing. Somebody will misunderstand a word you said or something you did. Somebody else will always want the last word and will never accept responsibility. Jesus could not work miracles in a town where his own friends doubted his divinity. And in spite of our best efforts, we cannot convince some people to go to church, to treat a neighbor with kindness, or to have a change of heart. We don't always get good results, even when we should.

When things don't go our way, they may be beyond our control. But we will feel satisfied if we've done all we can under the circumstances, and if keep our eyes fixed on the Lord, pleading for mercy.