

Homily - 18th Sunday of the Year C

A rich man, who owned a multi-million dollar grocery store investment, was once on his deathbed. All four of his children gathered around him and were praying. The man somehow regained consciousness, looked around, saw his children and asked them in turn: “Thomas, are you here?” “Yes! Daddy, I’m here for you”, he replied. “Elizabeth, are you here?” “Of course, daddy, I will not abandon you”, she replied happily. “Martha, you are here?” She replied, “Certainly, I love you”. “And, you too, Stephen, are you here?” Absolutely, daddy, he replied proudly. To their utmost surprise, the dying father queried angrily, “All of you are here, then, who is in the grocery store?” How unfortunate! Instead of focusing on his eternal destiny, he was still preoccupied with earthly pursuits.

Brothers and sisters, such greed, even to the point of despising one’s self dignity and importance, is what Jesus condemns in today’s Gospel passage (Lk 12:13-21). Someone said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me.” Remember, an inheritance is a free money/asset; one has not labored for it; it was simply passed on from one to another; absolutely FREE. Perhaps, this person was even a very rich person; though very insatiable. Jesus could see through his/her greed and superficiality and dismissed him/her in these words, “‘Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?’ Then he said to the crowd, ‘Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one’s life does not consist of possessions.’” Some people simply delight in amassing wealth, no matter where it comes from. They never share; they only want more and more.

Against this background, Jesus posited this parable of a Rich Fool: A rich man ‘produced a bountiful harvest’ and asked himself, “‘What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest? ‘... I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones.’” In contemporary terms, “I will buy more stocks; I will invest in bonds; I will build bigger restaurants and resorts centers.’ Then, I shall say to myself, “Now ... you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!” That is, “Rest from church; no more spending time in prayers, take more vacations, play golf, and ‘wine and dine’ for a long time to come.” Apparently, this person did not even think about donating to the Church or for charity. God may say to such people, “You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?”

Nevertheless, some are greedy not only in life, but also in death. I once received a forwarded message attributed to an unknown author. A greedy, rich and dying

woman had told her poor husband, before she died: “Promise me that you will bury me with all my money in my casket.” The husband hesitated, then, promised to do so. A friend of the husband who heard about this told the man, “But you will not be that stupid!” The woman’s husband replied, “A promise is a promise; I gave her my word”. After the death and burial of the lady, the curious friend of the man approached again and inquired, “You don’t mean to tell me you put all her money in that casket; did you? He replied, “Of course, I did”. Then he went on, “I transferred all her money into my account and wrote a check of the entire amount and put it in her casket... She can cash it ‘over there’ if she wants to.”

Certainly, too much greed isolates people for genuine values. We should be rich in things that pertain to God through our dedication to the STEWARDSHIP OF TIME, TALENT AND TREASURE. God wants spiritual concern put before other priorities, as Christ proclaimed, “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ... your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well” (Matt 6:31-33).

Qoheleth declares in our First Reading (Ecc 1:2; 2:21-23), “Vanity of vanities... vanity of vanities! ... For what profit comes to man from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which he has labored under the sun? All his days sorrow and grief are his occupation; even at night his mind is not at rest.” Thus, St. Paul advises us in our Second Reading (Col 3:1-5, 9-11), to live according to our new baptismal dignity which is a triumph over vanities: “If you were raised with Christ, seek what is above ...not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Many people are lost in only secular pursuits; no church, no prayer life. How sad! Such people are only existing, but not living. Christ is our life.

Finally, Jesus is not condemning money or wealth. It is the attitude applied to it. Do we use our money or wealth for the glory of God and for the service of humanity? Has our money or assets become “a god” in our lives? St. Paul identifies “greed” today as a form of idolatry. Do I worship money by concealing the truth, killing, having an abortion, sell my body, selling my children into child labor or prostitution and exploiting others, as disposable objects, all for money? The Scripture says, “The love of money is the root of all evils” (1Tim 6:10). Beloved, may God help us to live in the freedom of the Spirit of God and enjoy our dignity as true sons and daughters of God, through Christ our Lord, Amen.