

Eighteenth Sunday C: Homily on Luke 12:13-21

THEME: SHARE YOUR RICHES WITH THE NEEDY

Objective: That your riches may not end in futility.

During the recession, people were advised to buy gold so that their money may not lose value. That was a good suggestion. But when you die, gold cannot buy you heaven. Riches help us to go to heaven when we use them to love God and neighbor, for example, by supporting the family, the Church and neighbors. This is how we store riches in heaven for eternal life.

Though Christ's death opened heaven to us, Christ himself says in Mt 25:34-36: Enter the heavenly kingdom, because, when I was hungry you gave me food, when I was thirsty, you gave me drink, when I was sick or in prison you visited me. If we do the same or similar services, like paying school fees for poor children, Jesus will say the same to us after our death.

The meaning of life cannot be found in hoarding wealth here on earth, but only in sharing these with the needy, because we are here today and gone tomorrow. What you do not donate in life, death will donate it, but you will not get a credit for generosity. Hoarding riches greedily here on earth is a futility, as Qoheleth says in Ecclesiastes, after observing the death of wealthy Israelites.

Yes, we should work hard. We should earn money, knowledge, skills, and other riches and use them to achieve the purpose of our existence here on earth. We are here on earth to prepare for heaven.

The first reading from Ecclesiastes 1 and 2 reminds us that the greedy acquisition of goods and the selfish hoarding of them are useless behaviors because when the hoarder dies he goes to eternity empty-handed, and his heirs gain, and, perhaps, waste his riches.

In the responsorial Psalm (90), the psalmist challenges us to listen to God and allow Him to soften our hearts that we may share our blessings with others: *“If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”*

In the second reading, Col 3, Paul directs our attention to those treasures that endure and warns that greed for wealth and influence is idolatry. He advises the Colossians to *“put to death, their parts that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry.”* It is adoration of wealth.

In today’s gospel, (Lk 12: 13-21), by relating the parable of the foolish rich man, Jesus warns us against all types of greed, because greed takes our life’s focus away from God and away from serving and loving Him in other people. Instead, greed directs all our energy and attention to fulfilling the self, making our wealth the basis of our security, whereas *“one's life does not consist of possessions”*, though we need them.

Greed for wealth causes dissensions in families and nations. Hence, instead of hoarding earthly wealth, Jesus proposes richness in what matters to God: Love, generosity, charity, which the foolish rich man had not considered. Yet these are necessary for our eternal happiness.

1) Today' s message invites us to share our blessings with others: our time, our money, energy, property and our talents, because we are stewards of God' s creation. Even if we are poor financially, we may be blessed with intelligence, good will, a sense of humor or the ability to encourage, inspire and support others.

God expects us to give our thanks to Him for all these blessings by sharing them with others for His glory. The Scriptures are clear about tithing – giving 10% of our income to God' s cause. (Lev 27:32) Sharing our resources, our services, words, or hospitality revitalizes our brotherhood in God our Father.

That is why it is not appropriate to rush back home after Mass. We need to first share as God's family.

2) Let us control all the different forms of greed or attachment to selfishness, power, eating, drinking, wealth, gambling, drugs or sexual promiscuity. As greed directs all our energy and attention to fulfilling the self, its objects become our false gods, and they will consume us unless we change.

Christ who detached himself even by sacrificing his body and blood for our salvation is now being praised by over two billion people. As we receive him in Holy Communion he reminds us: "You too, share your riches with the needy."