

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C 5th August 2007

Gospel (Luke 12:13-21)

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But Jesus said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And Jesus said to the crowd, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Then Jesus told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Scripture Reflection

This passage reflects on greed for earthly possessions. Of course, earthly possessions themselves aren't 'wrong', but to be greedy for wealth is. (Remember, greed is one of the seven deadly sins) The issue that Jesus raises in his parable is seeking wealth or possessions as the highest priority in one's life, rather than drawing close to and being in good relationship with God and others.

Jesus infers in this passage that one's life does not consist of possessions. Or to put it another way, how much wealth or possessions you have is not what will bring life. Indeed, in the case of the rich man in the parable, the more riches he had, the more obsessed about them he became. He may have felt free because he could relax and be financially secure, but in truth he was captive to his greed for building bigger barns, keeping his wealth secure and building his own happiness.



Now the problem was not that the man was rich – that in itself is not a bad thing; rather the problem was that he was more fixated on his wealth than he was on God. The rich man was living just for himself. But there is more to life than entertainment, than "eating, drinking and being merry". Without being too dramatic about it, we must also face the fact that one day we will die. And when we die, we cannot take any possessions with us. What then will we have left to represent ourselves? And how do we live our life today in response to this future reality?

Ultimately, greed is a type of idolatry. It is holding something as more important, more desirable than God. In order to follow Christ freely and fully, we need to be on guard against this greed, this idolatry, in every area of our life. For many of us, like the rich man in the parable, it might be our wealth and possessions. For others, it may be a relationship, a career, a status, a passion. All of these can be good things, but the danger is where we place them in relationship to God. We cannot take them with us when we die. Rather, the question we must ask is "What will I do with the things God has given me?" We need to entrust all that we have to God, and trust in His will for our lives. To follow Christ's way, we need to let our lives be governed not by our abilities or possessions, but by our response to His call before all else. God's call for each of us is to live not for ourselves but for God and for others.

Pilgrimage: a journey of faith

The pilgrim's pack is a light one; there is no need to store up or hoard things on the way. The pilgrim is to travel lightly; it is a journey of trust in the God who provides all that we need on the way with the Cross.

By the grace of God, I am a human person and a Christian; by my actions, a great sinner; by my condition as a pilgrim without a roof, of the lowliest species that goes wandering from place to place. My possessions are a sack on my shoulders with a bit of dry bread and a Holy Bible that I carry under my shirt. No other thing do I have.

Anonymous Russian, A Pilgrim's Way, I. In, Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants, The Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee. 43.

The pilgrim traveller is one with all seeking right relationships will all whose paths are crossed. This Christian traveller in faith is thirsty for new horizons, hungry for justice and peace, searching for truth, longing for love, open to the absolute and the infinite.

Pope Quote

"At present, the positive efforts [toward reducing poverty] are being affected by the still largely unsolved problem of the foreign debt of the poorer countries. The principle that debts must be paid is certainly just. However, it is not right to demand or expect payment when the effect would be the imposition of political choices leading to hunger and despair for entire peoples. It cannot be expected that the debts which have been contracted should be paid at the price of unbearable sacrifices. In such cases it is necessary to find — as in fact is partly happening — ways to lighten, defer or even cancel the debt, compatible with the fundamental right of peoples to subsistence and progress."

John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 1991

WYD Action

2008 will be the first time that World Youth Day has been held in Australia. Previously pilgrims have packed up their bags and made a long journey to the other side of the world. This experience sure helps to discover how simply we can live when everything you need for a few weeks or months has to fit into a backpack.

How simply do you live now? What can you go without this week? Try go without TV, listening to your iPod, MP3 player or radio, using your mobile phone or internet messaging, surfing the net, spoiling yourself with sweets, snacks, soft drinks, etc.

How much unwanted or unused clothes and other things are around your house? Try to spend time collecting together your extra cloths to donate to St Vincent De Paul or similar organisations. Invite others in your community to do the same so that you can pass them on to those who need them.

WYD Cross and Icon

Since 1984 the WYD Cross has made its way around the world, throughout Europe, behind the Iron Curtain, and to parts of the Americas, Asia, Africa and briefly to Australia, being present at each international celebration of World Youth Day along the way. In 1994 the Cross began in earnest what has since become a tradition: its year long journey around the dioceses of the host nation of each international World Youth Day, as a means of prayerful preparation for the big event.

Heralding these international celebrations of young people, the Cross is now best known as "the World Youth Day Cross". The media have often called the Cross the "Olympic Torch" of the World Youth Day. It is a useful comparison. In each country that the Cross visits, it travels from cities to towns, parishes to prayer groups. Young people take charge of it, spend time in prayer with it, and encourage their peers to do the same.

Taken from the WYD 2008 website: www.wyd2008.org

Ritual and Prayer

Preparation

Establish a prayer focus incorporating:
coloured material
an open bible
a candle.

Ritual

Invite the group to gather around the prayer focus.
Read the scripture to the group gathered.
Invite the group to spend time in reflection.
Invite members to think of what is it they have that they can share with the world? (personal attribute, or a material possession, a value, a talent, a gift)
Ask members to share one of these things with the group.

Once completed, the group prays the final prayer together.

Prayer

God of all creation,

May we take example from the WYD cross which has been shared amongst the people of the world. Help us to encourage sharing amongst your people.

May we centre our lives on knowing you more closely. Help us to be less concerned about the things we have and the things we feel we need to have.

May we become more like you every day. Help us to be open to people of other faiths, to share of our own.

May we learn to care for your creation in the way you intended. Help us to be responsible caretakers who tread gently on the earth.

May the people of Sydney open their city and their hearts to the young people of the world. Help and guide each of us to live with openness and compassion - shining your light to the world.

Amen

Sacred Places

Take time out from your busy life to make a sacred space where you can reflect on your life each week. This place is your sacred place where you can come and not be disturbed while you reflect on your life in the presence of God.

- What has been revealed during this time of reflection?
- What experiences help feed my passion for God?
- How am I open to God's journey for me?
- What do I need to leave behind to follow God?
- How will I respond to God's call this week?

