

## **HOMILY for 18<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C**

After a relative's funeral, an old businessman took his young grandson for a walk around the cemetery. The man was pointing out various friends and relatives that had passed on. Pausing before one gravestone, he said, "Grandson, there lied an honest man. He died owing me \$10,000, but he struggled to the very end to pay off his debts. He was a good man and if anyone has gone to Heaven, he has."

They kept walking & came to another gravestone.

The man said, "Grandson, this man was not a very honest man at all. He owed me \$15,000 & he died having done everything he could to get out of his debt. If anyone has gone down below, he has."

"Well, Grandpa," said the young boy. "You are very lucky then."

"Why is that?" asked the old man.

"Grandpa, whichever place you end up in, you'll have some money to draw on!" replied the boy.

Anyhow, people fight over all kinds of things throughout human history. They fight over lands, power, popularity, glamor, daily basic necessities, different ways of doing things, and a host of other issues. Some of those fights usually involve only a couple of people while others stir up the whole village or country. But, one thing all the fights have in common is that they bring division in a relationship and tear a family apart. Evidently, we're told in this Sunday's Gospel that two brothers had a fight over their shares of the inheritance. I've done lots of funerals and helped with quite a few families deal with their tragic loss of a loved one in my many years of priestly ministry. A funeral usually pulls a family tightly together to help them find enough strength and courage to cope with its tragic loss. Unfortunately, sometimes it could bring out the worst in people as family members fight over their inheritance & many other issues.

Jesus was pulled into one of those fights & asked to settle it. He replied, "Friend, who has set me as your judge or arbiter?" He added, "Avoid greed in all its forms. A person may be wealthy, but his possessions do not guarantee him life." So, Jesus' initial reaction to this fight between two brothers over their inheritance was to detach Himself from it & run far away from it. He knew that all the fights over wealth & worldly possessions are often messy & ugly. For inheritance & money is usually a source of troubles & the cause of corruption to our souls. That's why He warned us to be careful about worldly possessions because they do not extend our life one day longer. We certainly cannot use them to buy our way to Heaven & eternal life. On the contrary, they might make us desire more wealth & turn us into a greedy person. Greed can cause a person to steal, lie, & hurt others to get more stuffs for him/her. Greed makes a person to be unsatisfied with what he/she has got & simply want more at the cost of the poor & underprivileged.

That's the problem that we've seen happening in our society these days. Many wealthy people do not think that they have enough & continue to expand their empires to make more money. They never think about ways to return some of their profits to the community or help out the poor & the underprivileged around them. They can live a lavish lifestyle while their neighbors have to struggle every day to find enough basic necessities. Jesus shows us a similar story of a rich man in this Sunday's Gospel as He says, "There was a rich man who had a good

harvest. 'What shall I do?' he asked himself. 'I have no place to store my harvest. I know!' he said. 'I will pull down my grain bins & build larger ones. All my grain & my goods will go there. Then, I will say to myself: You have blessings for years to come. Relax! Eat heartily, drink well. Enjoy yourself.' But, God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life shall be required of you. To whom will all this piled-up wealth of yours go?' That is the way it works with the man who grows rich for himself instead of growing rich in the sight of God." As we just heard, a rich man who is blessed with a good harvest does not want to share it with people in need. Instead, he builds a bigger storage to keep it all to himself. Then, he tells himself to sit back & enjoy himself for many year. But, what he does not know is that God is in charge and can call him home anytime. He cannot take all of his wealth with him. He should have used his wealth to help him be in good terms with God & prepare for the eternal life.

I recently lost a close friend who was called home to the Lord unexpectedly and a bit too early. Her premature death really brings home the message of this Sunday's Readings. Everything in this life is simply vanity; & we must make good use of God's blessings for us to help one another & build up a loving & peaceful world. In case you didn't hear the message of this Sunday's Reading, let me repeat it for you, "...All things are vanity... For what profit comes to a person from all the toil & anxiety of heart with which one has labored under the sun? All one's days sorrow & grief are one's occupation, even at night one's mind is not at rest. This also is vanity." So, we can work hard to accumulate resources for our retirement. But, if our work does not have a purpose, everything we do each day is just vanity. We simply run around in circle, day after day. If our life does not have meaning now & beyond this world, we'd not see the important value & the wonderful blessing of the eternal life. That's why we need to use our time & resources in this life to help us achieve eternal life & be in good relationship with God. Paul agrees with that & shares with us this message in this Sunday's Second Reading, "...Put to death whatever in your nature is rooted in the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires, & lust which is idolatry. Stop lying to one another... Put aside your old self with its past deeds & put on a new person."

My dear brothers & sisters, our life on earth is full of miseries & challenges. We work hard every day to earn a living & find some peace & joy for our souls. If God gives us some good blessings, we need to learn how to share them with people in need & use them to bring us closer to God. When we do that, we'll be able to have a peaceful & joyful life here on earth. We'll also prepare ourselves well for the eternal life in Heaven.