

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

This Sunday's Gospel talks about the rich and greed, which reminds me of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

The miserly millionaire called a family conference. "I'm placing a box of money in the attic," he said. "When I die, I intend to grab it on my way up to Heaven. See to it that no one touches it until it's my time to go."

The family respected his wishes. After his death, the millionaire's wife looked in the attic. The box was still there. "The fool!" she said. "I told him he should have put in the basement."

For that's where most of them would usually end up! Anyhow, I've done lots of funerals & laid to rest thousands of people in my thirty years of priesthood. Generally funeral is the time of farewell & sadness. The deceased's loved ones try to reminisce on past memories & comfort one another over the tragic loss. However, sometimes I have seen families fight over the inheritance. Hence, we've heard this Sunday's report, namely, "Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, tell my brother to give me my share of our inheritance.' He replied, 'Friend, who has set me up as your judge or arbiter?' Then, He said to the crowd, 'Avoid greed in all its forms. A man may be wealthy, but his possessions do not guarantee him life.'" So, apparently Jesus was caught in the fight over inheritance & was asked to settle it. Surely he did not jump for joy over it & was able to teach that man & the public on how harmful & destructive greed could be. It destroys relationships & disrupts the well-being & growth of a peaceful society. It definitely does not guarantee someone a long & happy life. We have seen countless rich & influential people ended up with a tragic & untimely death. That is why Jesus warns us to avoid greed in all its forms.

Next, He told us a parable about a rich man who was blessed with a good harvest, but did not use that wonderful opportunity to help the poor & the misfortunate. Instead, he pulled down his old grain bins & built up larger ones to keep the blessing of a good harvest all to himself. Then, he told himself, "You have blessings in reserve 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?" Next, God gave this serious caution, "That is the way it works with the man who grows rich for himself instead of growing rich in the sight of God." So, we could see that many of the rich have got their life priorities all wrong. Instead of using God's blessings for them to help the poor & the misfortunate & thence grow rich in the sight of God, they have decided to keep it all to themselves & go contrary to God's will. That is why we have seen the rich constantly trying to get their business empire grow bigger while ignoring the outcry of the poor & the plight of the misfortunate. That is why we have witnessed injustices against the lowly and public unrest happening around the world every day.

Many politicians these days praise Capitalism as if it's God's gift to the world. They think that Capitalism has no fault & can do no wrong. Then, they use Communism/Socialism to be the scapegoat & scare the public on any idea or action that might promote the common good & build up community. In other words, these politicians want to promote Capitalism at all costs & let individualism/privatization run wild at the cost of community services & human compassion. They push the public to hate any idea for community & common good & call those advocates

Communists/Socialists. Ironically, they have never spent a day under a Communist/Socialist government at all.

As someone who has the feet in both worlds – Communism/Socialism & Capitalism, I know the strength & weaknesses of each system. Communism/Socialism is right to get the public make personal sacrifices & build up community. But, it's wrong to suppress individualism ownership & personal responsibilities. On the other hand, Capitalism is right to allow individualism responsibilities & private ownership. But, it's wrong to suppress community & common good. Worst yet, it allows & promotes greed & selfishness that goes contrary to our Christian virtues & God's will for the salvation of the whole world. In fact, one of the Church Encyclicals called ***Rerum Novarum*** (*Rights & Duties of Capitalism & Labor*) supports the rights of labor to form trade unions, & rejects both Socialism & Capitalism while affirming the right to private property & to a living wage. Unfortunately, we have seen the rich get richer & continue to dodge paying more taxes while the poor become poorer & keep getting more public services cut. We have witnessed how greed has destroyed our country right now without any concern for the value of the human life & dignity of the poor. For all the politicians & the elites care about is to make more money & get richer themselves. To them, Jesus has this warning, "You fool! This very night your life shall be required of you. To whom will all this piled-up wealth of yours go?"

My dear brothers & sisters, the First Reading is absolutely right when it says, "Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!" That is why it so vital for us to make good use of our blessings in this life to secure for ourselves the eternal life in God's Kingdom. Otherwise, we might not pass God's judgment on the Last Day. For, at the end of the day, we must grow rich in the sight of God instead of growing rich in the sight of human beings. We must resist greed & selfishness in all its forms by living a life of gratitude & kindness.