

HOMILY SUNDAY 18 – C (Homily 02)

“Time, Talent and Treasure”

(Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:21-23; Psalm 90; Col 3:1-5; 9-11; Luke 12:13-21)

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A grandfather who had received a new hearing aid told his doctor that the hearing aid was working well. The doctor exclaimed that his family must really be happy about that. The grandfather replied that he hadn't told them he could now hear well, and that he had changed his will three times already!

The Gospel today invites us to be rich towards God rather than hoard possessions. That means to have a healthy balanced attitude towards wealth.

The grandfather in that little story taps into an all too present reality in many families. Wills are always a potential trap for disputes that can divide families bitterly for years and even decades. In many ways, the saying that money is the root of all evils rings so true. As followers of Jesus we do need to check our attitude towards possessions, money and wealth.

St Paul in the second reading presents us with a mind-blowing new paradigm, a new creation, a new reality that frames this challenge. He tells us that we are a new self in Christ that is constantly being renewed. We have been raised with Christ to sit with him at God's right hand. For Paul, that is already a present reality and we must be about living it out in the here and now. This means that we have died to sin and sinfulness, like greed especially in the light of the Gospel, and our whole way of living has to be transformed, our actions, our emotions and our belief systems. What better way to express this transformation than by the way we handle money, which as he says, can be the same as idolatry.

Winston Churchill had a good insight into this reality. He once said that we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. In that simple quote lies much wisdom.

Some dioceses have a stewardship program that focuses on Time, Treasure and Talent. The faithful are encouraged to give of their time by volunteering; to give of their treasure by making significant donations, and to give of their talent by serving their community and their church using their God-given talents in music, organization, teaching, governing, reading, etc.

Some denominations encourage the practice of tithing. Following their example as Catholics would eliminate the need for putting on fund-raising activities that encourage addictions, such as bingo. Tithing is a biblical teaching of giving back to God one tenth of one's earnings. Even if people in our world today would give the equivalent of one hour's pay, or one fortieth of their salary, let alone one tenth, that would solve most of the financial woes of our parishes and dioceses.

One particular priest has taken the practice of tithing seriously. He not only tries to give to charity one tenth of his income, he also tries to tithe his time by giving back to God at least ten percent of his time each day in prayer. Adding up the time he spends in bible study, reading scripture, spiritual reading, liturgy of the hours and Eucharist, he discovered that he gives back to God over three hours a day in prayer. That is not taking into account a monthly 24 hour retreat and an annual retreat of 8 days, which would put him well over 10% of his time each day given to prayer and his relationship with God.

Responding to God's call to serve the church as a priest, brother or sister is another way to be rich towards God. How sad that many young people today feel so little hope, find so little meaning in life, think of themselves as so lacking in self worth, that they choose to end their lives prematurely through various forms of suicide. Rather than end their lives, could they not be persuaded to just give their lives away in humble loving service, and they would find the meaning that they are seeking? Surely responding to a vocational call is a much better way to dispose of one's life.

Bishop Emeritus Noel Delaquis is an example of one who is rich towards God. Former bishop of Gravelbourg diocese, he was forced to resign due to injuries from a car accident that left him severely physically impaired. Rather than simply retire, he chose to explore a religious vocation and entered the Trappist monastery at retirement age as a novice. He is about to make his final vows as a full fledged Trappist monk at Holland, Manitoba, and is quite fulfilled in his final years.

The Eucharist that we celebrate now is an invitation for us to be loyal stewards of God's many gifts. We are fed and nourished by the Word of God and the Body and Blood of Jesus, and are sent out to care for all of God's creation using our time, talent and treasure.

Let us heed the Gospel call, therefore, to be rich towards God rather than hoard possessions, and maintain a healthy balanced attitude towards wealth.