

## The Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time Cycle C 2022

The first reading from the book of Ecclesiastes calls all human efforts “vanity of vanities”. Vanity can mean “inflated pride in oneself or one's appearance” or can refer to something that is valueless or meaningless. The author Qoheleth tells us that once we make ourselves the center of the universe, from our perspective, all our efforts appear to be in vain. From the human point of view, life is struggle, we may or may not succeed, we may accumulate many goods, we can lose them all, but even if we do accumulate lots of good, when we eventually die, we have to leave everything behind. The main reason is because we have no control over time. More precisely we do not have control over the length of our lives.

However if our true destiny is a life with God, death is not something to fear but is a welcome relief from our toils on earth. Our purpose in this life is to become like God in love, not in power and might, therefore we must see the challenges that we face, as opportunities to grow in love, and not as threats to our security or attacks on our pride. We shall understand why Jesus said the greatest of all must be the servant of all. We tend to measure our achievements by our own standards of wealth and power, and we do not recognize that as creatures of God our role is the development of humanity. Therefore service to others is what builds up humanity. As we become more loving, our kindness, our gentleness, our compassion and our forgiveness will transform those around us, thereby, transforming the society in which we live: making it mirror God's love for us, to each other.

In Jesus' time, it was a predominantly an agrarian (farming) culture and there was limited fertile land for everyone. To become a wealthy farmer, you had to acquire land from others. The more land you had, meant others had less.

Which is easier for you to remember, who are the richest men in the world or who showed you an act of kindness as a child?

Kindness is forever remembered. The richest people in the world in billions of dollars are:

5. Warren Buffet (\$ 118B)
4. Bill Gates (\$129B)
3. Bernard Arnault (\$158B)
2. Jeff Besos (\$171B)
1. Elon Musk (\$219B)

What have they done for you? Why should there be people starving in this world, while others have more than they could spend in their lifetime?

Gates and Buffet say that they plan to give most of their wealth to charity. Jesus reminds us that when we die, **and** one day, we shall all die, we cannot take our material wealth with us. What does it matter if we became super wealthy, but cannot enjoy peace and happiness in the next life. We ought to convert our material treasure on earth, into heavenly treasure by acts of loving-kindness.

Power, knowledge, and riches can be used for selfish pleasures and comforts or for the good of all humanity. If we have been blessed with wealth, what are we doing to help others the less fortunate than ourselves? If we are the less fortunate we can still offer kind and comforting words and prayers for others.

Kindness lasts forever.

We have been fooled in believing that wealth; good looks, power and fame will guarantee happiness. Thanks to the many stars of Hollywood, California, whose lives are a mess, we know that these things alone will not bring us happiness.

Some television commercials proudly proclaim the ridiculous and false statement that “Image is everything”. Like fools we rush out to buy what we cannot afford or do not need: expensive cars, designer clothes, overpriced jewelry, and a host of beauty products. Our culture of consumerism constantly keeps telling us that we need more and more things. There is difference between needs (basic comforts) and wants (things we desire but which are not essential for happiness).

“Enough” is a word that the devil hates. It pains him when people say “I have enough, I do not need any more, let others less fortunate than myself have the rest”. “Enough” puts an end to greed, one of the seven deadly sins. Once we realize that we have enough, we are able to focus on relationships and the needs of our less fortunate brothers and sisters in Christ. Our values of kindness, gentleness, compassion, honesty and forgiveness will enable us to nurture long lasting, loving relationships that are the true source of happiness. We shall also discover that there is great joy in helping others. The rich fool in the Gospel could only think of building larger barns. He never thought of sharing. He never discovered the joy of giving. That very night he died and at heaven’s gate he was denied entry because he had no acts of loving-kindness credited to his name in the book of life.