

Wellspring

Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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July 31, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we celebrate the Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. We continue to journey with Jesus and his disciples through the Gospel of Luke. Last week, we reflected on being prayerful and becoming praying disciples. We were reminded of the importance of desiring and discerning God's will for us and praying that God's will happens in all matters. We are to bring all that we are into God's will – our present needs, our failures of the past and our future needs and concerns. All our Scripture readings this Sunday call us to look beyond the material world and the transitory and passing realities that we confront daily and focus our attention on the eternal existence of love and truth.

Today's first reading, Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23, invites us to reflect deeply and remain open to discovering realities beyond what we have already seen or experienced and to the mystery that keeps unfolding for us. All things as we see them pass away...the real and the lasting and the eternal are beyond what is immediately perceived...goodness and truth and life and love are all eternal, ever present, unchanging realities. We only discover them - we do not invent them or create them. We must remain open to this amazing mystery as it continues to unfold for us.

Paul tells the Colossians (Second reading of today's mass, Colossians 3:1-11) that they must seek what is above because they are a people raised with Christ. They must set their hearts on what pertains to higher realms...be intent on things above rather than things of earth. Through Baptism believers already enjoy a share in the risen life of Christ – “you have been raised up in company with Christ.” This baptismal belongingness to Christ should be evident in all aspects of life. Expressions such as “putting aside your old self” and “putting on the new” are reflective of the early baptismal ritual of disrobing as a sign of forgoing old sinful ways and putting on new white robes as a sign of beginning new life in Christ. Believers are to strive for their daily transformation in Christ by the grace and power of Jesus Christ. Transformation into the likeness of Christ requires renewed and deliberate efforts. Only daily effort will keep our vision clear and fixed on Christ “our Life.”

The disciples of Jesus lived in a world where wealth was considered a blessing and poverty was a curse. An important and essential part of their formation was a transformation of their attitude toward wealth and material possessions. Jesus did not speak of wealth as bad but called for a change of attitude toward the possession and use of it. In the Gospel reading of

today's mass (Luke 12:13-21), Jesus tells the story of the "rich fool" who pulled down his barn to build a bigger one to gather in his rich harvest. The man never saw beyond himself. Neither did he see beyond this world. He lost himself even in this world!

This reminds us of the story of the rich young man who wanted to know from Jesus what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responded to him by suggesting that he follows the commandments that he knew. The young man seemed to want to do more. Jesus invited him to do "one more thing", to sell all he had and give it to the poor and choose to follow him, if he really wanted to. The young man could not make that choice. He went away sad because he had many possessions, and he was not ready to part with them. Like the "rich fool" in today's excerpt, he failed to see beyond himself...neither did he see beyond this world.

The occasion for this parable about the rich man and the proper use of wealth was prompted by a request that Jesus acts as an arbiter in a family dispute over an inheritance. Jesus had told them, repeatedly, that possessions could not guarantee life. In this context, Jesus warns them about "Pleonexia", translated in today's Gospel reading as "greed." "Pleonexia" or "Pleonexy" (pleonektein in Greek) is described as "the insatiable desire to have what rightfully belongs to others" - greed, avarice, covetousness. Such yearning places value on what people have rather than on who they are and who they can become. Such desire or yearning is not compatible with discipleship and so the disciples of Jesus must "avoid it (pleonexia or greed) in all its forms."

Jesus said, "What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? What could one give in exchange for his life?" (Mark 8:36-37). Possessions have a way of possessing us. They begin to control our lives and we lose our freedom and joy. Erich Fromm, the German Social Psychologist and philosopher says, "Greed is a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction." Greed in all its forms consumes us from inside and out. We let go of many good things in our life because of our greed of having even better things. We lose our sleep, our happiness, we hurt the people around us, all these as a price for our growing needs and desires. We must learn to maintain a balance of our needs and desires to enjoy a happy life with what we already have.

Possessions do not guarantee life! Possessions could take away the joy of life! We have choices to make: grow rich before God or the world! Being rich before the world does not guarantee life! We are challenged and inspired to prayerfully reflect on our own attitude toward the passing pleasures and possessions of this world and make choices in favor of the lasting, enduring wealth that bring us into the eternal.

I want to encourage you to take a few moments each day of this week to be still and to reflect on how your day has been. Reflect on how your choices of the day reflect your attitudes toward the passing realities of the material world.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 31, 2022

Christian faith is not only a matter of believing that certain things are true, but above all a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is an encounter with the Son of God that gives new energy to the whole of our existence. When we enter into a personal relationship with him, Christ reveals our true identity and, in friendship with him, our life grows towards complete fulfilment.

(Pope Benedict XVI)

Collect

Draw near to your servants, O Lord,
and answer their prayers with unceasing kindness,
that, for those who glory in you as their Creator and guide,
you may restore what you have created
and keep safe what you have restored.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

Ecclesiastes reflects thoughts of the Greek poets on human life as something that does not move in any direction or toward any purpose, but only in endless tragic and often comic repetitions. There is a cycle of nature and nothing new under the sun.

However, hidden in these poetic sayings, is a wisdom that is difficult to unravel. This is a wisdom that reveals to us that goodness and truth and life and love are all eternal, ever present, unchanging realities. We only discover them..... we do not invent them or create them.

Today's reading, difficult as it may be to interpret, invites us to reflect more deeply and remain open to discovering realities beyond what we have already seen or experienced. Remain open to the mystery that keeps unfolding for us. All things as we see them pass away...the real and the lasting and the eternal are beyond what is immediately perceived.

Be wise and keep looking beyond what you see...keep searching for the truth; for that which is lasting, enduring, real and eternal.

Psalm 90

Psalm 90 is the only psalm that has been attributed to Moses. In fact, this psalm contains all our theology. And all our theology begins with Exodus 3:1-4 where the God of both OT and NT, the God of the whole Bible, reveals himself. One of the finest hymns in the English language opens, "O God, our help in ages past" (Isaac Watts' hymn) is based on this beautiful psalm. This psalm has two poles: the shortness of human life and the eternity of God.

Our poet has found a way to close the gap between these two poles. He tells Yahweh how wonderful it is to have him "with" us, his poor creatures, despite the awesome chasm that separates God and man - this "witness" is to be found in all generations. So, there is no reason why we, in our day, cannot repeat and reaffirm God as our dwelling place, Our Home (90:1).

**Teach us to number our days aright,
that we may gain wisdom of heart.
Return, O LORD! How long?
Have pity on your servants!**

Colossians 3:1-11

Paul tells the Colossians that they must seek what is above because they are a people raised with Christ. They must set their heart on what pertains to higher realms...be intent on things above rather than things of earth.

Remember: Your life is hidden with Christ in God - you are immersed in Christ. Therefore, put to death whatever in your nature is rooted in the earth: immorality, impurity, greed, evil desire, lying, etc. Put on the new person formed in the image of the creator.

Luke 12:13-21

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Saint of the day, July 31 - St. Ignatius of Loyola and 359 other saints are remembered this day.

Ignatius was born in the ancestral castle of the Loyolas in the Basque province of Guipúzcoa, Spain, on October 23, 1491. He became a page in the service of a relative and then a knight in the service of another relative, who employed him in military undertakings and on a diplomatic mission. While defending the citadel of Pamplona against the French, Ignatius was hit by a cannonball on May 20, 1521, sustaining a bad fracture of his right leg and damage to his left. During his long recovery, the only books available to him for reading were about the life of Christ and biographies of the saints. Ignatius was captivated by what he read. Inspired by the lives of Christ and the saints, he gave up all his ambitions and surrendered everything “for the greater glory of God”.

Ignatius was a man who was once disinterested in education and was ambitious to be a military officer. He was, on his own admission, in his Autobiography, “a man given to the vanities of the world, whose chief delight consisted in martial exercises, with a great and vain desire to win renown.” He was now a changed man. He spent many months in prayer discerning what God wanted for him. Other men were attracted to his spirituality and became his companions. Ignatius instructed them to “seek the greater glory of God” and the good of all humanity.

In 1534, at the age of 43, he and six others, one of whom was Saint Francis Xavier, vowed to live in poverty and chastity and to go to the Holy Land. They became known as the Society of Jesus. All were ordained into the priesthood in 1537. Ignatius became the Order’s first Superior General, and he sent his fellow Jesuits as missionaries to the East Indies, Morocco, the Congo, Ethiopia, and South America. At the time of his death in 1556, there were 1000 Jesuits in 100 different educational institutions throughout the world. Georgetown University, the first Jesuit school in the United States, opened in 1789 in Washington D.C. Today there are over 21,000 Jesuits on six continents and in 127 countries. Jesuits are involved in education, evangelization, pastoral ministry, retreats, and other works.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Some people are so poor that they only have money!