

Homily of Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, 2025

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:21-23; Psalm 90:3-6, 12-13; Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11; Luke 12:13-21

We read in the first reading, “Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!” The word vanity originates from the Latin word “vanus,” meaning “empty” or “void.” Another Bible translation is, “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” Vanity is preferring world-centered life instead of God-centered life. The first reading does not discourage or condemn accomplishments and possessions. Right at the beginning, God blessed his creation, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). Prayers of blessing in Psalm 90:17 and Psalm 115:14-15 are, “May the favor of the Lord our God be ours. Prosper the work of our hands! Prosper the work of our hands!” “The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children.” We say “Amen” to the blessing and the prayers.

However, the first reading reminds us that we are all sojourners on earth, and that earthly pursuits, worldly accomplishments, and material possessions are ultimately vain, empty, and meaningless when they are acquired through sinful ways or without connection to God. Jesus sums up the first reading’s message in the following words, “... for though one may be rich, one’s life does not consist of possessions” (Luke 12:15). Which is to say that our physical and spiritual increase and prosperity must be God-centered.

The second reading speaks of people who live world-centered life of immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, greed, and lying. They live life of corruption. They steal, murder, and destroy. St. Paul writes about such people in Philippians 3:19, “Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their ‘shame.’ Their minds are occupied with earthly things.”

In Philippians 3:20 St. Paul speaks about our “citizenship of heaven” and he encourages us in today’s second reading, “... seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. ... Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly...”

There are people who do not believe that there is God and that there is eternal life, either in heaven or in hell. The psalmist laments, “The fool says in his heart, “There is no God”” (Psalm 14:1). There are many Scriptures’ emphases on judgement and reward after earthly life. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus gives a vivid description of the Day of Judgement: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. ... Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ ... Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ...’” St. Paul warns unbelievers in Galatians 6:7

“Make no mistake: God is not mocked.” Numbers 23:19 states, “God is not a human being who speaks falsely” (Numbers 23:19).

We have examples of people of vanity in today’s gospel. Their problem was greed. The first man was upset with his brother and wanted his share of the inheritance. If his case was genuine, I imagine that Jesus, being the advocate of the oppressed, would have intervened on his behalf. Rather, Jesus saw the greed in his heart and addressed him, and all of us: “Take care and guard against all greed ...” By this statement, Jesus warns us that selfish desires must not rule us or lead us to sin.

The second person, the greedy rich fool, was unable to share his possessions with others. His action plan was, “I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself, ‘Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!’ But God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?’ Thus, will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God” (Luke 12:18-21). The psalmist and the Book of Revelations say of such fools, “In their riches, human beings lack wisdom” (Psalm 49:20). “For you say, ‘I am rich and affluent and have no need of anything,’ and yet do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” (Revelations 3:17).

Job reminds those their lives consist of possessions and those who grab, steal, accumulate, bicker, fight, and kill, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart” (Job 1:21). Jesus advises us in today’s gospel to be rich in what matters to God. The more we are rich in what matters to God, the less we store up earthly treasures for ourselves. The deeper one’s spiritual life is, the lesser one is involved in things of vanity. Therefore, we are challenged to share our treasures with others. We pray with today’s Psalm (90:12), “Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart.”

God has given more than enough resources to the world. God’s plan is, as St. Paul states, “Whoever had much did not have more, and whoever had little did not have less” (2 Corinthians 8:15). Sadly, suffering, poverty, hunger, wars, and various afflictions are caused by greedy men and women, and greedy establishments, companies, and countries. We pray that they may come to conversion, unhardened their hearts, and take positive actions towards eliminating the tragedies they continue to unleash upon the world.

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