

Homily – Deacon Steve Moses

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – August 5th, 2007

Reading 1

Ecc 1:2; 2:21-23

Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth,
vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!

Here is one who has labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill,
and yet to another who has not labored over it,
he must leave property.

This also is vanity and a great misfortune.

For what profit comes to man from all the toil and anxiety of heart
with which he has labored under the sun?

All his days sorrow and grief are his occupation;
even at night his mind is not at rest.

This also is vanity.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17

R. (1) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

You turn man back to dust,
saying, “Return, O children of men.”
For a thousand years in your sight
are as yesterday, now that it is past,
or as a watch of the night.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

You make an end of them in their sleep;
the next morning they are like the changing grass,
Which at dawn springs up anew,
but by evening wilts and fades.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

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

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Fill us at daybreak with your kindness,
that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.
And may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours;
prosper the work of our hands for us!
Prosper the work of our hands!

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Reading II

Col 3:1-5, 9-11

Brothers and sisters:

If you were raised with Christ, 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.
For you have died,
and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
When Christ your life appears,
then you too will appear with him in glory.

Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly:
immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire,
and the greed that is idolatry.
Stop lying to one another,
since you have taken off the old self with its practices
and have put on the new self,
which is being renewed, for knowledge,
in the image of its creator.
Here there is not Greek and Jew,
circumcision and uncircumcision,
barbarian, Scythian, slave, free;
but Christ is all and in all.

Gospel

Lk 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus,
“Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me.”
He replied to him,
“Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?”
Then he said to the crowd,
“Take care to guard against all greed,
for though one may be rich,
one’s life does not consist of possessions.”

Then he told them a parable.
“There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest.
He asked himself, ‘What shall I do,
for I do not have space to store my harvest?’
And he said, ‘This is what I shall do:
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 all who store up treasure for themselves
but are not rich in what matters to God."

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“One’s life does not consist of possessions”. I can think of two examples from my own life that teach me this truth first hand, and I’m sure you can find examples in your own life.

It’s vanity to believe that we can "take it with us."

Over 100 years ago, an American tourist paid a visit to the renowned Polish holy man Hofetz Chaim. The American was amazed that the wise man lived so simply—in a single room adorned only with books and a chair.

"Rabbi! Where is your furniture?" asked the tourist. "Where is yours?" the rabbi asked in turn. "My furniture? I am merely passing through," answered the American. "So am I," said the rabbi. And so are we my friends.

When my family moved from the cities to Northfield, all of our possessions fit into a single moving truck.

We loaded up the truck and off it went for a week while we took care of the business of title transfers, the sale of our old home, and the purchase of our new home.

But as the movers were loading the truck, we thought to ourselves, what would happen if the truck had an accident, or if it was vandalized with all our worldly possession in it? What would we do?

Yet after a week without all our stuff, we were just fine. In fact it was kind of nice not to have to worry about possessions; it was a feeling of being free.

When it was time to move into our new home we were dismayed as the movers kept taking “stuff” off the truck in what seemed an endless stream of boxes.

I wanted to say enough already, we don’t need all this stuff! And we didn’t and we still don’t need all of it.

“One’s life does not consist of possessions”. More recently for nine days this summer, my family and I lived in a tent up by the border between Minnesota and Canada. We pitched our tent beside the shores of a beautiful lake and we only had what we brought with us.

Did we survive without a microwave, without cable TV, without hot water? Yes. Did we survive without instant hot water, restaurants, grocery stores, and all the other conveniences we take for granted as Americans? Yes.

Did my kids survive with no cell phone service for over a week? Well, we mostly survived.

When you spend time without everything you take for granted, without all your ‘stuff’, it can set priorities where they belong. What is important in this life?

Do you find yourself in pursuit of more money in the workplace?

Do you find yourself in pursuit of a bigger better house with more yard?

Do you find yourself in pursuit of what the neighbor has rather than being happy with what you have?

Do you find yourself in pursuit of designer clothes and jewelry and feel you have the first and best of everything?

Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth in Ecclesiastes, vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!

In the Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh. Qoheleth says, “All is vanity and pursuit of wind”.

My friends, you can’t catch and hold onto the wind anymore than you can save yourselves at the time of your death.

Vanity and foolishness go hand in hand.

Vanity is vanity because it isn't real.

Vanity sets a standard that is false.

A fool is a fool because the fool does not accept what is real. Instead fools accept the illusion.

In our Gospel reading from Luke God says, ‘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 all who store up treasure for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God.”

So what does matter to God?

I can think of at least five things that matter to God. Keep in mind this is not an all-inclusive list.

1. Be merciful as your Father is also merciful!

If we would be children of our heavenly Father, we must imitate Him in mercy and goodness; as He lets His sun shine on the good and the bad, and allows the dew of His grace to fall alike on the just and the unjust, even so we must not only love our friends, but also our enemies.

2. Judge not, and you shall not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be condemned!

Christ here forbids two kinds of judgments: the rash or presumptuous judgment and the arrogant judgment.

When we judge rashly we are usually working with groundless suspicions or hearsay on our part. This is wrong because by our act of judging the love and honor of our neighbor is injured. No one can look into the heart of another and see the motive of another's omissions and commissions but God alone who searches the heart and knows the intention.

The arrogant judgment is that of one who judges another without any right, as if he were the superior. When we judge others in any of these ways we usurp the right of God and bring judgment onto ourselves.

3. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven!

By these words Christ teaches that we shall receive forgiveness from God for the sins we have committed against Him, only upon the condition that we from our hearts forgive others their injuries to us.

4. Give and it shall be given to you!

We are poor in many ways, and so we pray each time we say the Our Father, "Give us this day our daily bread."

But God answers us; Give, and it shall be given to you. You are my poor and you have other poor among you; do you then to these as you would that I should do to you.

The goodness and love of God should always be our model, although we can never reach it, for between our love and goodness, and the love and goodness of God, there is an infinite difference.

For the little which we give to the poor, God gives us a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing.

The promise Give, and it shall be given to you applies also to all other works which we do for the love of God, for He rewards with both graces and blessings upon this earth, and with eternal glory in heaven.

Lastly, something that matters to God is this parish. 150 years ago the people of God came together in this area and celebrated Mass for the first time. Many of them were the first settlers to the area, and many of them are your ancestors.

In 1907, fifty years after that first gathering, the people of God came to realize that they not only needed, but they wanted a place to worship God together.

A place to honor God and to honor their Czech origins.

They came to a realization about what's important to God, and that was to grow together in faith and holiness, worshiping God together, worshiping on this very spot, in this very church.

This legacy did not just come about with out hard work and sacrifice.

When it was decided to build a church a call went out to all the families in the area.

Each was asked to donate \$10 dollars toward the building of the new church.

If you could not afford the ten dollars, and many could not, they were asked to provide labor, to use their time and talent to help build the church.

Everyone contributed something.

To help put it in perspective, a typical family spending \$10.00 on goods and services in 1907 would be like our spending about \$480 today.

It was a sacrifice. It was a decision on the part of those families to put God first, and to place their trust in Him.

To trust God who rewards with both graces and blessings upon this earth, and with eternal glory in heaven.

This fall you will have a chance to look at your own contributions to the parish.

When you do, I ask you to remember those who went before you.

Remember the benefits you have enjoyed by celebrating your marriages, baptisms, funerals, and participating in the Sacrifice of the Mass all these years in this beautiful church.

Ask yourself what kind of legacy you want your children's children to have in the future.

We are totally and completely dependent on God and our life in God is our only true destiny.

For Christians, this is the way of Christ.

As we move now to the Communal Table of the Eucharist, let us remember those who went before us and sacrificed their time, talent, and money to allow us worship together here today.

May the Christ who's Body and Blood we share nourish, enlighten and inspire us to the only true reality—life in him.