

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C-2022) Take Care to Guard Against All Greed!

Ecclesiaste 1:2;2:21-23; Psalm 90:3-4,5-6,12-13,14,17; Colossians 3:1-5,9-11; Luke 12:13-21

Dear family and friends of the Co-Cathedral of St. Theresa,

Today we give glory and praise to God as we culminate the 90th Foundation Anniversary of our parish. Our multi-cultural celebration of faith celebrates our unity amid the diversity of our parish community's cultures, traditions, and backgrounds. Indeed, the various translations of the prayer Hail Mary placed at the backdrop of the Blessed Virgin Mary statue and at the grotto express this unity in diversity. Mary, our Mother, is our intercessor for our unity, her children.

We celebrate our being a Church enriched by the diversity of culture!

We commonly understand Church as an institution, a structured community, or a religious group. These are correct, but it is good to remember that it is a mystery of love and devotion to the person of Jesus. It is a relationship that grows and matures in time, living and witnessing the faith. Everything else in the Church must start and flow from this. Each of us here at CCST is invited to find our niche, our place in the Church according to God's gifts bestowed on each of us, and we are not only to acknowledge that we need to wake up as Christians; we are called to grow up, clean up and show up to help build up the Church.

On the other hand, our unity as one parish community is a never-ending process and challenge. The call of the Responsorial Psalm is a relevant and everlasting reminder for all times, "if today you hear his voice harden not your heart." A hardened heart can shut off the voice of God. It is cold, insensitive, and unfeeling - it dulls the person's ability to perceive and understand, and it doesn't happen overnight. It's a series of neglect and taken for granted. It is a terrible disease. It leads to a spiritual arrest. While we intend to grow the virtues -- faith, hope, love -- and gifts of the Holy Spirit, like wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord in our lives, the hardened heart prevents the flourishing of these spiritual gifts and virtues. One of the causes of a hardened heart is pointed out by our Lord Jesus in our gospels today. He said, "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist in possessions" (Lk 12:15). He elucidates this through the parable of the Rich Fool. It tells a story of a farmer who worked hard on his farmland and was blessed with a rich harvest. While there is no sign that he is dishonest to others to gain more, we can tell that the farmer is wrong on at least three counts:

First, greediness overtakes him. It is like a snake; once the head enters, it manages to squeeze its body. Greed leads him to think only for himself and to hunger for more. Someone says that greed is a fat demon with a small mouth, and whatever you feed it is never enough. It does not fill the void of human wants; instead, it leads a person to a feeling of nagging emptiness and wants to fill it with anything possible that doesn't matter what it is.

Second, he celebrates bountiful harvests without being grateful. Jesus calls the rich man "fool," a word used in the Old Testament for anyone who rebels against God. The rich man believes he is successful in farming because of his efforts. Thus, he does not feel beholden to anybody or God. That is why St. Paul calls greed idolatry. The rich man forgets that all creation is caused by God, like air, rain, soil, and all the elements. We can claim nothing as our own in this world; even personal achievements cannot come without God's grace. The person who thinks he succeeds by his effort alone tends to become proud and selfish, but the person who recognizes that every blessing is from God would grow humble, grateful, and generous.

And third, he depends solely on material possessions for security and happiness. He believes that by becoming wealthy and having big storage, his future is already guaranteed. He does not know that the rest of his life is less than twenty-four hours. The rich man is foolish to think that his wealth alone would make him happy and secure. Perhaps, he may have forgotten that love, friendship, intimacy, and other Christian values are essential for joyful and meaningful living. What does it matter if you have all the world's riches and no real friends? What does it profit if you get a more significant share of inheritance but lose a brother or a sister in the process? Would not love and intimacy in the family be more important than a piece of property? Besides, when death comes, all our human achievements – including material possessions and honorific titles – will all be left behind. Indeed, we haven't seen a big u-haul truck following the hearse to the cemetery during funeral services. The Book of Ecclesiastes reminds us that earthly things are of passing value, while they are necessary but should not become our obsession – "all things are vanity." Therefore, we have to see all things in the light of eternity.

St. Paul's advice is worthy of further reflection as we seriously listen to the warning of our Lord to take care to guard against all greed. He challenges us to think of what is above, not what is on earth, knowing that our lives are hidden with

Christ in God. Yes, he hides us in himself so that the world cannot snatch us away from him, but we are also tasked to do our part -- to put to death the harmful vices against self and cause divisions among us, like greed, immorality, impurity, passion, and evil desire, and to stop lying to one another (cf Col 3:8-9).

May God grace us the strength to be resolute in trying to put to death these harmful vices while setting our hearts on what matters to God that will help water the continued growth of our effort to build a welcoming place to all who seek the grace, fellowship, and love of God in our parish community.

Hail Mary, full of Grace. Pray for us!

God bless you!

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor