

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time –Year A

Sept. 23, 2017

I think that you will all agree with me if I say that we live in a culture that wants us to believe that our personal wealth, influence or possessions are what make us valuable or worthy. And so, what we do is compare ourselves with one another. We are envious of what others may have or look like (last week Fr. Gig talked about the statistics showing that only 4% of women found themselves beautiful); yet, we all know that what we have or look like could all be taken away any time.

My dear people, in today's parable of the wealthy landowner, we are shown a different value system and another way of approaching how we could all be living. We are reminded that God's generosity is offered to **all** labourers, no matter who they are or what they look like, that each is given an **equal** share in the Kingdom of heaven, and that God's love is not measured on scales!

Rather, we are invited to live humbly, to take what we have earned, and share what we can with others, all for the glory of the Kingdom. Isn't what we are aiming for in our lives?

And this goes for each one of us. Because at the end of it all, when we meet God face to face, what will He ask us? He may ask us how responsible were we with the gifts he showered us with? Because this is what love is: to die to self...die to our selfishness so that others can live.

As a priest, I too have a responsibility to share God's gifts with you. I am responsible for your spiritual welfare, and for the place where you come to worship as a member of God's family here at Our Lady Queen of the World.

And to be honest, at times, the thought of all that responsibility **is** troubling and overwhelming. You see, like each one of you, one day, I too will have to give an account of my priesthood before God.

And I am sure that God is expecting much of me; as one priest's friend of mine wisely said: "On judgement Day, I believe that every priest is going to be asked one question. And the question is going to be this: "Who else did you bring with you"? I can only hope that I will be able to honestly say that I was able to bring at least a few people to the Lord.

And how do I try to do this? First, through the administration of the Sacraments; and then, in empowering **YOU** with the gifts you have received when you were called at Baptism by name, so that it will be *as a family that we all grow in faith*.

Now, if there were no building to make this happen, no offices, no pastoral staff already using their own gifts, nothing would happen here...I would not be here. (Maybe some of you would prefer another pastor...too bad...you are stuck with me ☺).

And so, we exist and are able to do God's work only through the generosity of those who support what we do here.

In my 30 years as a priest, I have heard so many misconceptions about the financial reality of the Catholic Church in Canada. Perhaps this is the reason that only 20% of people carry the financial burden of their parish, yet they all receive from it.

Unlike some churches in Europe, (I think of Italy and Germany for example), the only source of income for us to be able to have a parish, is through the Sunday collections. It is incredible the amount of people who think that the Vatican helps! I personally know a priest who was building a new church in *this* archdiocese who could not even pay himself because not enough was coming in.

And this takes me to the Capital Campaign that we started over one year ago. As you may have noticed we only have 33 angels put on the Praying Angel cut-out displayed near the Tabernacle. And since each angel represents 12 apostles at the Eucharistic table, this means that only 396 people or families have contributed so far, when we have well over 1500 families in this parish.

To those of you who did contribute, thank you. It is because of your generosity that we were able to complete a big part of the projects we want to finish.

But because we were not able to reach our goal, we have to put on hold a few projects like the side entrance, the bell tower, the parish centre where all the pastoral works take place, and the parking lot. It may be on hold, but I

truly believe that we will be able to finish this project if we all come on board as a parish family.

Again, remember that this is **YOUR** parish, and I hope that you recognize and value what we do here, especially what **I**, personally try to do as your pastor with my wonderful team which is: bring you to God with me. When I meet my maker, when he asks me that question as to how many I am bringing with me, I hope that I will have all your names with me!

There is a saying that goes like this: “Put your money where your heart is.” My dear people, as we come here, as Christians on this, **OUR HOLY GROUND**, our hearts should be set on the Kingdom; why else are we here? And Jesus is very clear that, if we make the Kingdom our first priority, “all these other things will be given you as well.” (Matt 6:33)

Indeed, it is on this, **OUR HOLY GROUND**, where we are reminded again and again that, as children of God, we have to make a choice about where we want to belong...to the world, or to God. And by our coming here we are making that commitment. How do we live that commitment?

Let us never forget that one of the basic principles of the teachings of the Holy Scriptures (the Word of God) in which we believe and by which we try to live, is that all things find their origin in God.

**All** that we *have* and **all** that we *are* is of God! And all that we have and are, is a gift, not to be kept for ourselves, but to be shared in order to help God build His Kingdom in the world.

I was looking at the statistics about the generosity of people in the world at large. It was not a surprise to me to read that the most generous people are the poor. I am not surprised, because the poor are usually very attuned to the needs of others; the poor, because they have been there, have more empathy and compassion, which is the key to their generosity.

At last Wednesday's Mass, in the Gospel of Luke, we heard Jesus say to them: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God".

I guess the poor do have a better understanding as to what is important in life...to be there for one another...to help others...to die to self so that others can live, understanding that our lives are fragile and limited in this world.

And if the statistics show that the poor are more generous, statistics also show that in the Christian world, the Protestant are more generous than the Catholics. Does that mean that they are more attuned to the importance of the Kingdom in their lives? I hope not.

Is it because the Protestants heed the word of God better than we do as Catholics and take more seriously God's call to be grateful stewards of God's bounty...I don't know, what do you think? It has even been my own experience in the parishes I worked at that some Christians from other denominations became Catholic. They are some of the most generous.

As we leave, I would like us to take to heart St. Paul's words today when he says: "If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, not the things that are of the earth," words from the same Paul who reminds us in another of his letters that "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully...for God loves a cheerful giver"

Are we cheerful givers? Is our giving done with a spirit of thanksgiving to God for the blessings we have received in our life? Or, is our giving done with reluctance and stinginess?

Do we give God the first cut, or do we give God the leftovers, the loose change in our pockets?

My dear people, let me end with this. I know that I am a little long today, but I would not be a good pastor if I did not bring this about. You hardly ever hear me speak about these matters...maybe I should!

But remember, that as your pastor, I have responsibilities. And my biggest responsibility is to prepare you to come on this journey with me towards the Kingdom God has prepared for us through the seeds that are planted through what we do *here* on this **YOUR Holy Ground**. You would not expect less of me and the wonderful pastoral team we have here.

Today's Good News in the Gospel ends with us hearing about God's generosity towards us. How generous are we to HIM who wants us to continue His work here at Our Lady Queen of the world, *our Holy Ground*?