

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
(Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23 / Luke 12:13-21)
04.08.2019

Dear brothers and sisters,

The word “Gospel” means good news. Every gospel passage proposed to our meditation is always good news for us from Jesus Christ. That is not always obvious. It is up to us, with the help of the Holy Spirit and the Church, to discover what the good news is.

In today’s gospel passage, Jesus tells us that true and lasting happiness, and the real security in life we have a legitimate right to long for, are not given to us by what we have or dream of having, but by what we are. The way to true and lasting peace is not to have and to have more, but to be, that is to say to live in relationship with God, with our neighbour and with ourselves.

We are not our own creator. We are creatures called to live in relationship with our Creator God. We have to seek for the Lord’s will in order to do this. If we live in relationship with the Lord and do His will, we shall experience true and lasting happiness. This is one facet of the good news of the gospel heard today.

We are called to live in relationship not only with God but also with our brothers and sisters in humanity who were brought to life by the same Creator as we were. Our fraternal relationships consist in loving, respecting and serving one another. If we do so, then we shall experience true and lasting happiness. This is another facet of the good news of the gospel heard today.

Finally, we are called to live in good relationship with ourselves, trying to look at ourselves as the Lord sees us, to love ourselves as the Lord loves us, to respect ourselves as the Lord respects us. If we succeed in doing this, then we shall experience true and lasting happiness. This is also a facet of the good news of the gospel heard today.

When we shall die, we shall not take all that we possess with us: It is well known that a shroud has no pockets. On the contrary, our life of relationships – with God, one another and with ourselves – will accompany us in our passage through death towards fullness of life.

What gives us true and lasting peace is not what we have, even with the most comprehensive insurance policy possible, but what we are, our relationship with God, with one another and with ourselves.

Given this, how important it is for us to nurture our relationship with God each day of our lives in order to be ready for eternal life with Christ in the presence of God. Our life of relationship with Christ here on earth will continue after our death. This relationship with God in Christ is the common denominator between our life here on earth and our life after death,

Thanks be to God, it can happen that our relationship with the Lord is easy. We may enjoy the Lord’s presence. We may encounter him peacefully and joyfully in prayer, both liturgical and personal, in the prayerful reading of the Sacred Scriptures, or in the prayerful reading of the book of nature, the book of our lives and also the book of the life of the world.

But let us be realistic; sometimes, maybe even most of the time, our relationship with the Lord can be problematic: we may seek Him and wait for Him without apparent success. In this case, innumerable questions arise in our hearts and minds. We ask ourselves: Where is God? What is he doing? When will he manifest himself to us? We ask for his help in prayer, and he does not seem to hear or give answer to us. We don't see him; we don't feel his presence; we don't recognize him. With the psalmist we murmur in our hearts: "How long, O Lord, will you forget us" (Ps 12:1).

The truth is that the Lord is always with us, even when we don't see or hear Him. To seek the Lord in the dark, to wait for him unceasingly with faith, hope and patience is to be in relationship with Him. That relationship will remain at the time of our death and beyond. This is the source of our peace. We now know that Mother Theresa of Calcutta was afflicted for many years with a deep sense of God's absence probably for the whole last half of her life. But she remained faithful to her life of prayer throughout all those years and it is obvious that the Lord was always mysteriously present by her side. The presence of the Lord to us, our presence to him, is the golden thread which runs throughout our whole life and beyond. Perhaps we shall not understand the Lord's ways before our passage through death. But let us be sure that, then, we shall be given an answer to all our legitimate questions.

What we have cannot save us, but what we have is not bad in itself. It is clear that we need to possess a lot of things in order to be. Everything depends on the way we relate to what we possess. If we possess for ourselves alone, like the rich man in today's parable, this is not good. Let us listen to the rich man's reflection again. It is all about himself: "What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops. Then he said; this is what I will do; I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them, and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time..." It is all about himself. This rich man is his own saviour. He is in charge. He is in control. "But God said to him: "Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?" If we possess for ourselves alone, this is not a source of peace in our lives; it is not the cause of true and lasting happiness. On the contrary, if we share what we possess with those in need, that is another matter. If what we possess helps us to enter into relationship with those in need in a spirit of solidarity and sharing, then what we possess becomes good news.

Let us ask the Lord to rekindle our desire to be and to remain in relationship with Him. This is the surest way to prepare ourselves for that great encounter with Him in eternity which knows no end.