



Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time [C], August 1st, 2004

Readings

Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

Luke 12:13-21

Dates to Remember

August 6: Feast of the Transfiguration,

Anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima

August 9: Anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb over Nagasaki

Quotes

"In the case of needy peoples it must be asked whether belonging to the Church places people on a rich island within an ambient of poverty. In societies enjoying a higher level of consumer spending, it must be asked whether our life style exemplifies that sparingness with regard to consumption which we preach to others as necessary in order that so many millions of hungry people throughout the world may be fed."

World Synod of Bishops, *Justicia in Mundo*, #48

"It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards 'having' rather than 'being,' and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself. It is therefore necessary to create life-styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments."

Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, #36

"As we let nonviolence fill our inner life, and as we walk the way of the Beatitudes, we see God at work. We are filled with hope because we know God is leading us and transforming humanity into God's reign of peace. We learn firsthand that God, thankfully, is in charge, and though we are sinners, we are greatly blessed."

John Dear, SJ

"To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, states should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption . . ."

Principle 8, The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992

"Do not let a desire for wealth cause you to become so consumed by your work that you prevent happiness for yourself and your family."

Thich Nhat Hanh

"Respect for nature by everyone, a policy of openness to immigrants, the cancellation or significant reduction of the debt of poorer nations, the promotion of peace through dialogue and negotiation, the primacy of the rule of law: these are the priorities which the leaders of the developed nations cannot disregard. A global world is essentially a world of solidarity!"

Pope John Paul II, July 23, 2001, Audience with President George W. Bush

Thoughts for your Consideration

There is a temptation in the culture of the United States to become addicted to work and accomplishments, a temptation to worry about money, a temptation to find one's value in possessions and to judge life by one's material wealth and status. The scriptures strongly challenge this part of our culture.

Jesus says "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions." Paul writes: "Put to death the greed that is idolatry." The Teacher in Ecclesiastes points out that all the fruit of human toil can sometimes just be "vanity."

The wealth of the United States is striking when we compare the U.S. situation to the economic situation of many other nations. In light of the economic inequality between the United States and other nations, the desire of the United States government to defend its economic interests can often appear to other nations as "greedy" and "selfish." At the same time, many individual Americans are very generous with their possessions and time and talent. Not all people in the affluent American society are worried about possessions and wealth.

God's word today invites us to be aware of our own behavior as individuals and as a society. Out of this awareness--out of this examination of consciousness--will come the wisdom to live lives that are more in tune with the gospel values of Jesus. Then will come a genuine ability to celebrate the gifts we have been given. Then will come a freedom to share and enjoy those gifts without being enslaved to them.

We are not all greedy, yet sometimes we are tempted by "a culture of greed." The good news of Jesus Christ invites us to be free.

Questions for Reflection in your Faith Sharing Group

When have you been most worried or concerned about material goods and possessions? How did you deal with your worry or concern? What helped you keep your values in balance?

Actions – Links

- This month we mark the 59th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombings of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Visit the web site of Tri-Valley CARES for an analysis of the current U.S. nuclear weapons budget [http://www.trivalleycares.org/FY2005_Nuclear_Weapons_Budget_Request.pdf].
- Inequality.org [<http://www.inequality.org>] is a nonprofit organization based in New York City whose mission is to illuminate the causes and multidimensional consequences of the inequality of wealth, income, power and opportunity in America; and to move this problem onto the front burner of American politics and public discourse.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you said, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Keep us from being preoccupied with money and worldly goods, and with trying to increase them at the expense of justice.

Lord Jesus, you said, "*Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.*" Help us not to be ruthless with one another, and to eliminate the discord and violence that exists in the world around us.

Lord Jesus, you said, "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*" Let us not be impatient under our own burdens and unconcerned about the burdens of others.

Lord Jesus, you said, "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be filled.*" Make us thirst for you, the fountain of all holiness, and actively spread your influence in our private lives and in society.

Lord Jesus, you said, "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*" Grant that we may be quick to forgive and slow to condemn.

Lord Jesus, you said, "*Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.*" Free us from our senses and our evil desires, and fix our eyes on you.

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Lord Jesus, you said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.*" Aid us to make peace in our families, in our country, and in the world.

Lord Jesus, you said, "*Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.*" Make us willing to suffer for the sake of right rather than to practice injustice; and do not let us discriminate against our neighbors and oppress and persecute them.

Prayer from the Catholic Community Forum Web Site [<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/litany15.htm>].

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-Fr. John Bucki, SJ, Editor and Writer

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