

Homily: 18th Sunday, OT, C, Jul 31, 2016

Theme: All things are vanity; Store up treasures in Heaven

Our readings today begin with a diatribe from Ecclesiastes against those whose lives revolve around meaningless goals.

"Vanity of Vanities," the Preacher, Qoheleth, says,
"All things are vanity."

People work hard for things that pass away.

It is all in vain.

In the Gospel, from Luke, Jesus tells a parable about a farmer whose goal is to be rich, and when he has far more than he needs, merely stores what he has, and dies that very night.

"Seek that which is above," Paul tells the Colossians and us, and then he lists some of the things that hold us back in our seeking God: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, greed and lying.

The readings ask us to consider our priorities in life.

What is it for which we work so hard?

Usually we work hard for something that we always wanted.

Once we have it, we enjoy it, for a while,
and then we work hard for the next thing.

We often work in vain.

What is a successful life?

Is a person's life successful if he or she is making a good salary?

There's a story about a grandmother
who pulled out pictures of her three grandchildren
and showed them to a friend saying,
"That one's the rich doctor,
that one's the rich lawyer and
that one's the chairman of the board of a large corporation."

Is success predicated on salary?

That is the way that most people calculate success.

But are they correct?

A doctor is successful not if he or she has a prosperous practice
but if he or she becomes the healing hands of Christ for the sick.

A lawyer is successful not if he or she is part of a profitable firm,
but if he or she uses learning, knowledge and talent
to protect people and the community,
to do good for people and the community,
or, simply, to be just.

Many times an incorrect view of success is based on honors and titles.

Is a priest a success if he becomes a Monsignor or a Bishop?

No, success is not measured by titles.

A priest is on the road to success
if he can draw closer to God each day
while he also draws, those he serves,
to join him on the journey to God.

How can we determine if a marriage is successful?

Is a marriage successful because a woman and a man have been
together for twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years
and have avoided divorce?

Marriage anniversaries are important,
but do they point to the success of a marriage or only to its longevity?

A marriage is successful
if the man and woman are better people,
more loving people, because of the marriage.

The sacrament of marriage is celebrated
when the husband and wife become
the means of salvation for each other.

Again and again in the Gospels
we see that it is attitude that Jesus is most concerned with.

If the man in the parable had been thanking God for his wealth and had taken some steps to share his good fortune with those in need then it would have been a very different story.

Instead this man focusses his energy on acquiring wealth and storing it up for himself in order that he will have security for the future so that he can then live a life of leisure.

He gives no thought to God or to his less fortunate neighbor.

The purpose of our lives is to become rich in God's sight.

It is not to acquire wealth so that we can indulge ourselves and become independent of everyone else.

God's values are completely different then the values of this world.

He desires things like justice, peace, charity, love, patience, sharing, faith, and hope.

These are quite contrary to the things that the world teaches are important such as independence, wealth, luxury, leisure, and power.

The Christian is someone who has made adjustments in their life.

They have realized that the values of this world are transitory

and knows that they cannot bring true fulfilment.

They place their trust in the things of God and understand well that true fulfilment consists in embracing the heavenly virtues such as truth, humility, honesty, patience, compassion and kindness.

The adjustments we made a few weeks ago in our response to the missionary appeal demonstrate we have made proper adjustments.

The money donated to the Kigala Uganda Development Unit (KUDU) exceeded \$8,000 dollars.

But just as important, Father Charles was very pleased with the sponsorship of the children.

One of our parishioners leaving mass sponsored a child and said “She now has a daughter she never had.”

It was wonderful and very touching.

Unlike the farmer, we focused on the plight of the children and responded.

We stored up treasure in heaven.

The same can be said of all the food, clothing and other necessities we regularly bring

to the Martin de Porres Room for those in need.

Remember success is predicated on how each of us is becoming more and more the reflection of God we were created to be.

Success is predicated on our ability to assume the person of Jesus Christ.

St. Paul says in the second reading that our lives are hidden with Christ in God in such a way that when Christ appears we appear.

That is success.

Success is not a present reality, it is a goal, the goal of Christian life.

The goal is reached, the life is successful, when every aspect of life reflects the person of Jesus Christ.

That is success.

All else is vanity.

God Bless you all!