

18th Ordinary Sunday
July 31, 2022
“Striving for Godly Things”

Ecc1 1:2...2:26

Col 3:1-11

Lk 12:13-21

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

In our culture and society, everyone is striving for something that will fulfill them. From the time we are born, we have needs that must be met. As we grow older, those needs often become superseded by “wants”. And it is the “wants” we strive for that we think will bring us happiness.

Consequently, human beings are in a constant condition of striving. We want the best of the past to be repeated again and again. And we always want more than we already have. We want to be successful at whatever we attempt. We want to find the perfect spouse and enjoy a perfect marriage – We want healthy, intelligent children who will make us proud – We want a steady income and increasing wealth – We want every recreational opportunity – We want good health and a long life! Of course, this list can go on and on!

However, this is not the way life is. Everyone has setbacks – Often we must start over – And even when things are at their best, deep down, we sense that we are still missing something – perhaps, something vitally important. That sense, or feeling, becomes stronger the older and more experienced we become.

The scriptures for today tell us just why we feel this way – and what we must do about it. We are looking for fulfillment – But we are looking for it in the wrong places – and from the wrong things.

In the Gospel of Luke, someone wants their share of an inheritance. Yet, Jesus refuses to get involved in the dispute. However, greed is present in one or in both of the brothers. So, Jesus tells us that life is not about the material things we possess, or want, or even need. In the parable, the wealthy man thought that he had it all. He had everything he had striven for. Now he was going to enjoy life – and would have a good time for years to come!

Yet, he missed what was important. He had been, and still was, self-centered in everything he did. He forgot that it was God who permitted his wealth – But that wealth was to be shared! There was so much good for others that the man should have done – and he did nothing. He had neglected God and the things that mattered to God. He would die that very night – And he would have to account for his terrible failure in what was most important!

The wisdom of Ecclesiastes teaches us the “vanity” – the “emptiness” – of all things material – or things of this world alone. For most of us – probably all of us – life has been a struggle in one way or another. Most of us have spent sleepless nights of anxiety and worry because of the problems we face with family, friends, with job, our own health, or the future. Hopefully, though, our struggle was undergirded with faith and trust in God. Because God is always there. God is present with a bigger plan and design that includes our struggles, our success, and our failures. Thus, we must keep on striving – to seek God’s will in all things – to be part of what God wants for us and for the world!

St. Paul reminds us of what I think we forget at times – especially if we were baptized as infants. We forget that with our baptism we have died with Christ. We have died to all that is evil, sinful, and unworthy of the Kingdom. Yet, with that baptism, we have also become one with the Risen Christ, who lives at God’s right hand.

The Risen Christ is invisible to our material eyes. His glory is seen in another realm or dimension. But we are one with him, nevertheless. And we will see him in his glory when he comes for us! In this, we can have complete confidence.

Brothers and Sisters, we are present here, today, because we truly strive to overcome all those vices that Paul mentions. Because we are weak, we continue to struggle with sin. But we must not forget the many forms of our pride and greed that still serve ourselves instead of God. These are, often, the hidden sins in what become the material and human wants we so desperately strive for at times!

So, let us pray, today, that God gives us the grace of perspective.

May we understand that all our human striving
must also be for God’s glory –

May we join the pain of our striving for goodness
to that of the suffering Christ –

And may we always share our blessings with those who have so much less!

Amen.

July 31, 2022

Msgr. Russell G. Terra