18th Sunday in O.T. 2022

*“Vanity of vanities. All is vanity! For so it is that a man who has laboured wisely, skilfully and successfully must leave what is his own to someone who has not toiled for it at all.”* These words are intended to jolt us into reality; they remind us that our work, our toil, is not the be-all and end-all of life. Someone has said, “The best use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts life.” We are defined by our being, not by our doing; we are human “beings”, not human “doers”! We need a focus other than work.

In the Gospel of St John, on three occasions Jesus asked, *“What are you looking for?”* The first time was at the beginning of his public ministry - John the Baptist had pointed him out as the Lamb of God to two of his disciples, and they immediately followed Jesus. The next time he asked, *“What are you looking for?”,* was in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Judas, with the Chief Priests and Pharisees, came to arrest him. The third time was at the empty tomb, when he appears to the weeping Mary Magdalene. The context of all three questions, predisposes us to understand, that it is not a thing or an object which was being sought, but a person. If we challenge ourselves to respond to Jesus’ question, we too will hear the invitation, as did the disciples*, “come and stay with me”*; we will hear him say, as he said, even to his betrayer, Judas, *“I am he”;* he will call us by name, as he did the woman*, “Mary”*! *“What are you looking for?”* Jesus Christ is the answer!

It is not possible to live in our world and not to be aware of the suffering thoughtlessly inflicted upon so many, or the cruel exploitation by some of others. As we survey our broken world, the question that arises so often in our minds and hearts is, “Where is God?” Perhaps another way of stating that question is to ask, “What is the Lord saying to us; what does he expect of us?” This is the essential question we must carry in our hearts each time we come together for Mass and listen to the scriptures being read. When the scriptures are read it is Christ himself who is speaking to us” *(cf SC7).* What is the Lord saying to us today? Are we convinced of the utter reliability of God’s love for us? *(cf LF 17).*

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus confronts us with this truth: *“a man's life is not made secure by what he owns, even when he has more than he needs.”* Ours is a very competitive society, causing so many to live with a high level of anxiety, desiring to be recognised for what they possess, rather than what they are. While it is necessary to work in order to live, and to provide for dependants, nevertheless, life has become very hectic; more and more targets, and higher and higher goals, are set. Many strive for economic security, apparently oblivious to the fact that family bonds, and the social fabric of society, are fragmenting

Today Jesus gives us some very practical advice. He says to us, that which we know already to be true but perhaps ignore, high levels of anxiety and stress and worry are simply bad for us – in the end they can kill us! Keeping holy the Sabbath day is not only about worship of God, but is also a day of rest! The word “holiday” is from Holy Day, a day of rest, a day free from anxiety, the day when we reconnect with the one who gives us an authentic sense of purpose, and gives life a meaning. We need to rest in God's love – a love that is utterly reliable.

But the Gospel has an even more serious message. The rich man in the Gospel, so wealthy that he does not have enough room to store his wealth, is in the end a fool, because in his good fortune he lost the sense of what was really important. This Jesus calls *“storing up treasure for yourselves in place of making yourselves rich in the sight of God.”* People like this think that God is so far removed from the reality of everyday life that it “makes no difference at all whether we believe in God or not” *(LF17)*. They imagine that they are in control of life. Is it any wonder that Jesus uses the strong language of “Fool!” We know that our real treasure is the powerful love of God and that our response to it determines our final destiny. “The best use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts life.”

It was the significance of this reality which inspired St. Paul to write, *”Look for the things of heaven, where Christ is.....Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on earth.....when Christ is revealed – and he is your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory with him....There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything.”* **Amen.**