

Riches are but Passing

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Eccl 1:2; 2:21-23)

²Vanity of vanities,* says Qoheleth, vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!^b

²¹For here is one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill, and that one's legacy must be left to another who has not toiled for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. ²²f For what profit comes to mortals from all the toil and anxiety of heart with which they toil under the sun? ²³Every day sorrow and grief are their occupation; even at night their hearts are not at rest. This also is vanity.

THE FOCUS: Vanity (Passing)

COMMENTARY

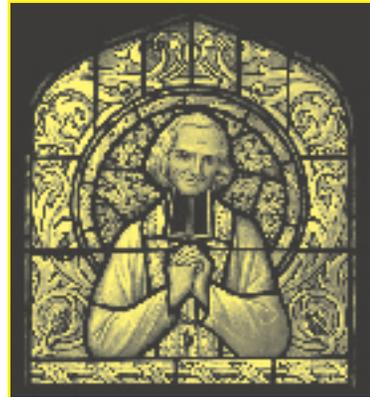
- Ecclesiastes or Qohelet is a wisdom book. It belongs to the Wisdom Literature.
- Qohelet = in the Greek translation is Ecclesiastes (Preacher).
- The author seems to be pessimistic when saying all things are vanity.
- V. 2:21 seems to indicate that man's efforts are useless. The reason: he must leave his property.
- V.22 asks what's the use of all toil and anxieties when working under the heat of the sun.
- V.23 provides the answer: sorrow and grief all his days; mind not at rest.

REFLECTIONS

We may also ask, why are we so busy doing many things, when after all we cannot bring the worldly things we gain from it when we physically die?

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9)

IF TODAY YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,
HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS.



SECOND READING (Col 3:1-5, 9-11)

¹* If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ²Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. ³b For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory. ⁵* c Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry. ⁹Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices ¹⁰* g and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator. ¹¹h Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian,* slave, free; but Christ is all and in all.

THE FOCUS: Higher Values

COMMENTARY

- The Reading is about higher values. The proper Christian behavior conforms to our dignity as baptized Christians, God's children.
- V.1 says "If you were raised with Christ, seek what is above."
- V.2 says "Think of what is above."
- V.10 says "Put on the new self."

Why should our orientation be "above?" The reason is in v.1 "where Christ is seated at the right hand of God," meaning, we focus our attention to Christ in heaven because he is interceding for us.

- V.3 also says our life is hidden with Christ in God. Practically, virtually, we are in the presence of God; we share in the mystery of God.
- V.10 explains what is new self: being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of the Creator.
- New self does not discriminate against any race or people. It is accommodating. New self transcends distinctions. It goes beyond blood ties, territorial boundaries, cultural conditionings.
- What is the behavior of those who seek what is on earth? (v.2) and living on old self? (v.9):
 - Immorality (*fornication*); impurity (*foul language*); passion (*sensual passion*); evil desire (*bad intention, graspingness, undue craving for possessions*); greed (*selfish greed*) = idolatry; lying to one another (*telling untruths*).

REFLECTIONS

As we are incorporated into Christ's body, we should live decent lives, consistent with our vows of baptism to renounce sin (not living according to base instincts, desires, etc).

Seeking what is above will not lead us to immorality but it will help us have a life with Jesus Christ, transcending, overcoming all boundaries and barriers that destroy us and keep us divided.

GOSPEL READING (Lk 12:13-21)

Inheritance

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me."

¹⁴He replied to him, "Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?"

Greed

¹⁵Then he said to the crowd, "Take care to guard against all **greed**, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

Parable of the Rich Fool

¹⁶Then he told them a parable. "There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest.

¹⁷He asked himself, "What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?" ¹⁸And he said, "This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods ¹⁹and I shall say to myself, "Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up

for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!" ²⁰But God said to him, "You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?" ²¹Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God."^{*}

THE FOCUS: **Greed**

COMMENTARY

- The Reading is about greediness.
- V.13 seems to indicate that in spite of the clarity of Jesus' mission, to preach in the kingdom of God, there is still someone who does not get his point. That someone is blinded by his material interest.
- In v.14, Jesus reacts to the person who asks for him his inheritance from his brother.
- Jesus is not sent by God to be judge or arbitrator of material things. He is here to assist in the birthing of the Kingdom of God. He has a higher mission. He should not be distracted.
- V.15 Jesus addresses himself to the crowd because of this little incident. Absolutely, Jesus rejects greed. All kinds of greed.
- Life does not become more dignified because of material wealth and possessions.
- The parable in vv.16-21 is a stern warning against greedy people. The rich fool is so rich that he develops a problem of space, where he could put all his wealth. The quantity of his material possessions is his security.
- It is the source of his "freedom" to enjoy life: "rest, eat, drink and be merry." The rich becomes hedonistic (life is all enjoyment).
- In the eyes of God, he is foolish (stupid); he has nothing inside his brain (v.20).
- He is misguided and does not conform to God's teaching: to be oriented to God's kingdom. God reminds him that death will make all his possessions useless.
- The greedy person may be rich in material things, but poor in spiritual things.
- The listener must prefer to be rich spiritually than materially.

REFLECTIONS

It is clear in the Gospel Reading that God abhors greed of any kind.

A person exhibits his greed when one desires right away his inheritance.

A greedy person cannot be spiritually rich because he commits one of Catholics' considered deadly sins.

The rich fool is an accomplished greedy person who does not use his riches properly. He thinks life is a matter of enjoying life. The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but doing justice.

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading talks about vanity. The Second Reading talks about the opposite of vanity (things that are above). The Gospel Reading talks about rich fool of his foolishness / greed. His vanity has taken over him.

How to develop your sharing/homily

Begin by describing what is vanity: emphasis on looks, accessories, titles, money, useless movements and activities without direction. Passing.

Vanity is caused by greed which is lust for attention, worldly pleasure, false securities, and attraction to what is unnecessary. (*Poor judgment, does not know one's priority*).

Today, the liturgy teaches Christians to be on guard against all greed, because it puts us down. It dissipates us, our energies and concentration. It keeps us away from God.

Even if we have given ourselves to God, there is a tendency for us to be complacent, to be less prayerful, less spiritual, because of the wealth, securities we have gained, beyond our needs.

God prefers that we Christians become more rich in the things that are God's. Never mind if we are materially poor.

God considers foolish those whose lives are spent to gain more wealth and property and sits on them.

How do we know if we are poor (destitute), not rich, in the eyes of God? When we do not know how to pray. When we do not know his message, we are not familiar with his words written in the Bible.

When we do not know the reasons why we are involved in the church. When we cannot explain

why we should love one another. When we do not know how to forgive and to give up something for the poor. We do not give way.

When we prefer gimmicks and externals to something deep and intimate. When we drown ourselves with compromises, appointments that do not allow us anymore to have quality time with our loved ones and God.

How do we know if we are rich in the things of heaven? It is revealed in our value system through our behavior.

When we are able to forego many activities, to have more time to pray.

When we consciously put big amount of time and money for our ongoing formation.

When we do not talk about trivial things, but talk more about what could help us in the practice of our faith.

When we humbly approach our spiritual directors. When we appreciate the reception of the sacraments.

Individual church workers, ministers, servant leaders should stand on guard against all forms of greed (appropriation / control of time, space and persons) so that their services in the church and communities do not become vain, a circus of vanity (to bloat the ego, venues for self-aggrandizement).

In the eucharist, Jesus comes down to us without any pretense. He sincerely gives himself to us in the forms of bread and wine. He takes seriously our sincere efforts to discover him and to be with him.

In the eucharist, Jesus says, "I am here" in a tangible manner. He enriches us with heavenly blessings. He calls us to hone our attention to spiritual things and to abandon pursuit of false sources of happiness and salvation.

True participation in the eucharist is never vanity and greed.

-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Today is St. John Baptiste Marie Vianney Sunday. Let us pray for our beloved priests. (HM)