

Mass Readings: August 3, 2025

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

First Reading

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:21-2:23

1:2. Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. 2:21. because sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. 2:22. What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? 2:23. For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity.

Responsorial Psalm 90:3-90:4, 90:5-90:6, 90:12-90:13, 90:14, 90:17

Second Reading

Colossians 3:1-3:5, 3:9-3:11

3:1. So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 3:2. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, 3:3. for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 3:4. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. 3:5. Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry) 3:9. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices 3:10. and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. 3:11. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

Gospel

Luke 12:13-12:21

12:13. Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." 12:14. But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" 12:15. And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." 12:16. Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. 12:17. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' 12:18. Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 12:19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' 12:20. But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' 12:21. So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Becoming rich toward God = Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness

The readings this weekend invite us to reflect with intention and authentic concern, more frequently and with greater depth on the priorities that motivate us. They challenge us to examine our priorities and to consider in what are they rooted and in what ways are we investing our time, energy, and affections to achieve those goals. Many of us are most likely to find that what we value most, the foundations from which our priorities are formed, are from spiritually unhealthy / unbalanced attachment to, as scripture says, the things of this world... the vanities.¹ Our faith might help us avoid succumbing to the extremes of outright hedonism, materialism, or individualism but is not the defining factor of our desires of the heart and choices in life. Christ matters but is more of an afterthought and his teachings are more of a moral guide.

What we listen to and contemplate today isn't the most popular of the teachings of Jesus, but it is one of the most basic truths for all human beings, and ought to be understood and followed especially by the [children of God](#). Jesus isn't offering one path among many equal paths to a happy human life in this world. Rather, he invites us into an all-encompassing and transformative relationship that, for those who believe and remain in him, is the only truly human path of abundant life that leads to holiness and heaven. We can agree here with Dr. Edward Sri who said, *"All that is very good, but living as a disciple involves much more. Discipleship is something intensely dynamic. It implies movement and transformation as the disciple deepens his friendship with Christ and becomes ever more like Him."*² Against the hedonism, materialism, and individualism that enslaves many people, Jesus offers freedom, joy, and peace of a type for which human beings hunger and thirst, and are in accord with our nature.³ Jesus is not opposed to enjoyment, prosperity, and self-concern, but he wants us to understand that when these are fruits of theological and human virtue, they will be ordered to our proper end and not to our self-defined ends.

This is the same lesson that we heard in First Reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes the Teacher, or Qoheleth the Preacher. Although the emphasis on the vanity and meaninglessness of things sounds harsh and despairing, it ought to be read as a reminder of an obvious truth: our life on earth will come to an end. We shouldn't treat the things of this earth, as wonderful and beautiful and useful as they are, as if they were ends in themselves. Solomon not lamenting the suffering and vagaries of human life, rather he is reflecting on the futility of human toil and the transient nature of earthly possessions, when neither God nor proper regard for human nature form nor inform the context our lives. It is an extended philosophical reflection on what things are truly worthwhile in life. Solomon sets a somber tone, urging us to look beyond the fleeting gains of this world. On page 39 of a Church document entitled the *'Bible and Morality'*, it speaks of how we should understand the 'vanity' in the Book of Ecclesiastes. The commission points out that the primary way we should understand the use of the word by Solomon is that these things, like vapor, are transient and insubstantial. Secondly, they have no enduring value.⁴ Of course, this is not a rejection of the goods in creation: the world is good, and work is a portion of our participation in God's creative goodness. But we need to remember that this world is passing away, that our final destination is heaven.

Moses, in Psalm 90⁵ echoes this theme of human transience in the face of God's eternity. His prayer is a plea for wisdom, for an understanding of our limited time on earth, so that we may live in a way that truly pleases God and brings lasting joy. His somber prayer, reflecting on the wilderness experience, serves as

¹ Paul VI, *Populorum progressio*, 19

²Sri, Dr. Edward; *Into His Likeness: Be Transformed as a Disciple of Christ*; Ignatius Press-Augustine Institute, 2018 <https://www.edwardsri.com/articles/following-jesus-as-a-disciple-excerpt-from-into-his-likeness>

³https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communio-stewardship_en.html

⁴https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20080511_bibbia-e-morale_en.html

⁵ <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/90>

a reminder that we cannot find authentic fulfillment without God. This is why it is so important to look at our lives within the context of God's gracious care and loving mercy.

The bad news highlighted by Solomon begs the question, then what? What other way can there be, under the sun. Following the lead of Moses, the second and gospel readings lead us to realize that nothing can be different when limiting ourselves to everything under the Sun as though there is no God, no creator. But rather, the answer is to look beyond the Sun, to the realm of heaven from whom comes the good news of our salvation from such an inhuman view of humanity, our meaning, and our purpose.

In the Gospel of Luke, we are given a direct challenge regarding our view and relationship with the passing things of this world, the vanities. It is not only a powerful commentary on the dangers of prioritizing these things in general but specifically pointing out the tragic end that awaits the person who lives believing that one's life does consist only in these things. But Saint Paul's Letter to the Colossians offers a powerful antidote. He exhorts us, "if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above". This means actively putting to death "whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry)". We are to strip off the old self and clothe ourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its Creator. This reading shifts our focus from the temporal to the eternal, from earthly desires to heavenly aspirations. St. Paul is urging us to identify our understanding of life, our values, with those of God, which have been communicated to us by the life and words of Jesus.

Here are two ways to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness".⁶ The first way is a [sacramental life](#). We believe that by God's grace at work in the sacraments, we receive divine life into our souls. Because of the sacraments, we are truly "rich in God". For example, by baptism, we become part of the Mystical Body of Christ. This means, as children of God, we are called and enabled to become Christ-like. The fullness of our identity which is fully revealed in Christ, can be known and understood by us.⁷ We also believe that the sacraments are not merely beneficial, but that they are essential for the Christian life.⁸ Bob Schuchts stated this wonderfully in his book on the sacraments and transformation, "No matter where we are in our spiritual journey, the sacraments play a key role in our transformation. If we are stuck in pride and self-righteousness, like Simon, the sacraments of Jesus' presence confront us with the truth about ourselves and give us the grace to soften our hearts. When we humble ourselves and recognize our need for a savior, like the woman, these same sacraments effectively cleanse us of our sin, heal the wounds and curses caused by sin, and bestow on us the blessing of our new identity in Christ. Then, as we grow in communion with Jesus, we become a source of his blessing to all those around us."⁹

A second way are attentive to and development of the virtues, both theological¹⁰ and natural¹¹ St. John Chrysostom said that what is good for our bodies and souls are chastity, humility, and the virtues. We should take care not to "indulge in delights which fattening the body make lean the soul, and bring a heavy burden upon it, and spread darkness over it."¹² [St. Ambrose](#), so integral to the conversion of St. Augustine said, that the rich fool "in vain amasses wealth", that in fact, "virtue alone is the companion of the dead, mercy alone follows us, which gains for the dead an everlasting habitation."¹³

⁶ Matthew 6:25-34 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/6>

⁷ https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_two/section_two/chapter_one/article_1/in_brief.html

⁸ https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_two/section_one/chapter_one/article_2/iv_the_sacraments_of_salvation.html

⁹ Bob Schuchts, *Be Transformed: The Healing Power of the Sacraments* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2017), 17–18.

¹⁰ https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_three/section_one/chapter_one/article_7/ii_the_theological_virtues.html

¹¹ <https://www.thomasaquinas.edu/news/aquinass-theory-infused-moral-virtue>

¹² *Hom. 8. in 2 ad Tim. and Hom. 39, 8. in 1 ad Cor.*

¹³ St. Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, A.D. 374. *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, Collected out of the Works of the Fathers: St. Luke*

Since the natural virtues spring from the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, we focus our attention on these three which relate directly to God. They are gifts which we receive from God which dispose us to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. As the foundation of our moral life, they are necessary to overcoming the battle between flesh and spirit and make possible our response to the universal call to holiness.¹⁴ By faith, we begin to see God in all things, to believe in God's word even in the hard moments of life. Faith becomes our anchor in life and enriches us with a vast spiritual treasure. By hope, we look to the future with trust. It is not an attitude of mere optimism about life nor a general confidence that the future will be good. It is a gift and a habit by which we lift our eyes to the horizon of life and see ourselves and our future as God sees them. We begin to want God more than anything else. By love, we acquire the ability to live sacrificially and to love completely, as Jesus did for us on the cross. Divine love in our soul frees us from disordered desires and selfishness. God's love for us becomes in our souls a deep invitation to communion with God. St. Athanasius suggested that *"a person who lives as if he were to die every day—given that our life is uncertain by definition—will not sin, for good fear extinguishes most of the disorder of our appetites; whereas he who thinks he has a long life ahead of him will easily let himself be dominated by pleasures."*¹⁵

Living in the grace of God through the sacraments and increasing in the virtuous life will help to ensure that we are living the authentic human life for which we have been made free. That is, to live in accord with our nature, as created by God in their image and likeness. *"All the faithful are invited and obliged to holiness and the perfection of their own state of life. Accordingly let all of them see that they direct their affections rightly, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect love by the use of worldly things and by an adherence to riches which is contrary to the spirit of evangelical poverty"*¹⁶

C.S. Lewis said what a user manual is to a car, morality is to a human being. For the car to function correctly, we must follow the user manual. For our human life to function correctly, we must follow Gospel morality. *"In reality, moral rules are directions for running the human machine. Every moral rule is there to prevent a breakdown, or a strain, or a friction, in the running of that machine."*¹⁷ We all recognize this truth in the realm of physics. And we don't question it. Soldiers who jump out of airplanes wear a parachute, because if they don't, the laws of physics will cause them some damage. They don't argue with it. They adjust their behavior to deal with it.

The moral life is similar. If we want to stay spiritually healthy, we must adjust our behavior according to the moral law that God has written in the human heart. We must listen to him, and if we love him, follow the commandments. This is the only certain path on the pilgrim's journey of hope, the way of Christ according to the truth of Christ for continued life in Christ. The message across all these readings is clear: our true treasure is not found in earthly possessions, but in our relationship with God and in living according to their will. We are invited to live with wisdom, aware of our mortality in this world and the hope of the life to come. *"All Christians, rich or poor, must keep their eye fixed on heaven, remembering that 'we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come'"*¹⁸

In this, Jesus is the perfect model. To grow more like Jesus is to grow more and more into the image of God, by whom and for whom we were created. In the kind of society that is the Kingdom, security comes from being part of a loving and caring community taking care of each member's needs. But even in the Church, which is the visible sign of that Kingdom, this kind of society, with some exceptions, has not yet been put

¹⁴ https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_three/section_one/chapter_one/article_7/ii_the_theological_virtues.html

¹⁵ St Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*

¹⁶ Vatican II, *Lumen gentium*, 42 https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html

¹⁷ Lewis, C.S.; *Mere Christianity* Book III

¹⁸ https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19370319_divini-redemptoris.html

in place. We still tend to believe that, if we do not look after ourselves, no one else will. The society that is the Kingdom involves a life of total immersion in and involvement with other people and our environment.

One of Jesus' favorite images to describe heaven is a wedding banquet, where his joy will be in us and our joy will be complete. And we don't have to wait to have a foretaste of that. Every Mass is a participation in the eternal joy of heaven. In the Mass, Christ renews his sacrifice on the Cross. He gave himself to us and for us on the Cross; he renews that same self-gift in every Mass. In the Mass we also receive the Eucharist, which unites us with Jesus in his Body and Blood, his Soul and his Divinity. We are already made sharers in heaven when we receive him. Finally, when we receive the Eucharist, Christ wants to unite us with each other. In heaven we will all experience a perfect communion of life and love with each other. The Eucharist initiates that unity even now, if we receive Christ with faith, hope and love. The Eucharist heals our love.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Becoming Rich Toward God:** A spiritual state achieved by prioritizing God and His righteousness over worldly possessions and transient desires, leading to an abundant and purposeful life aligned with divine will.
- **Charity (Love):** One of the three theological virtues; the divine love in our soul that frees us from disordered desires and selfishness, enabling sacrificial and complete love as Jesus did. It is eternal.
- **Discipleship:** An intensely dynamic and transformative relationship with Christ, implying movement and deepening friendship as one becomes ever more like Him.
- **Disordered Desires:** Appetites or inclinations that are not aligned with God's will or human nature, often leading to selfishness and sin.
- **Earthly Possessions/Things of This World:** Material wealth, goods, and achievements that are transient and insubstantial, lacking enduring value when treated as ultimate ends.
- **Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth/The Teacher):** An Old Testament book emphasizing the "vanity" and futility of human toil and earthly possessions when God is not the central context of life.
- **Eucharist:** The sacrament that unites us with Jesus in His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, renewing His sacrifice and initiating a foretaste of perfect communion with God and each other.
- **Faith:** One of the three theological virtues; the gift by which we begin to see God in all things, believe in God's word, and anchor our lives in Him, enriching us spiritually.
- **Greed (Idolatry):** An excessive desire for wealth or possessions, which the text explicitly equates with idolatry, indicating it places worldly things in the place of God.
- **Hedonism:** The pursuit of pleasure as the highest good and aim in life, contrasted with the freedom, joy, and peace offered by Christ.
- **Holiness:** A state of being set apart for God; the universal call for all Christians to strive for perfection in their state of life, aligning their affections rightly.
- **Hope:** One of the three theological virtues; a gift and habit by which we look to the future with trust in God, seeing ourselves and our future as God sees them, and desiring God above all else.
- **Individualism:** A social theory favoring freedom of action for individuals over collective or state control, contrasted with the communal nature of the Kingdom of God and Christian life.
- **Kingdom of God:** A society characterized by a loving and caring community where security comes from mutual support and total immersion in and involvement with other people and the environment; Jesus' primary teaching.
- **Materialism:** A preoccupation with or emphasis on material objects, comforts, and wealth, often at the expense of spiritual values.
- **Moral Law:** The divine law written in the human heart, which, like the laws of physics, dictates how human life functions correctly and leads to spiritual health when followed.
- **Mystical Body of Christ:** The Church, understood as the spiritual body of believers united with Christ as their head, into which individuals are incorporated through baptism.
- **Natural Virtues:** Good habits acquired through human effort and guided by reason, springing from the theological virtues.

- **Priorities:** The values and goals that motivate actions and choices, which the text challenges readers to examine for their roots and investment of time, energy, and affections.
- **Rich Fool Parable (Luke):** A parable told by Jesus about a man who stores up vast earthly treasures only to lose his life, illustrating the danger of believing that life consists only in possessions.
- **Sacramental Life:** Living in grace through the reception of sacraments, which are believed to infuse divine life into the soul and are essential for Christian transformation.
- **Solomon:** The biblical king often associated with the Book of Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth), known for his wisdom and reflections on the futility of earthly pursuits without God.
- **Theological Virtues:** Faith, Hope, and Charity; gifts received from God that dispose us to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity and form the foundation of our moral life.
- **Transience/Vapor (Hebrew: *hebel*):** The primary meaning of "vanity" in Ecclesiastes, referring to the fleeting, insubstantial, and temporary nature of earthly things.
- **Universal Call to Holiness:** The teaching that all Christians, regardless of their state in life, are invited and obliged to strive for holiness and perfection.
- **Vanity:** In the context of Ecclesiastes, the transient, insubstantial, and non-enduring value of earthly things when not ordered to God.

Homily content in summary question form:

1. What is the central challenge presented by the readings regarding our priorities?

The central challenge is to deeply and frequently examine what motivates us, what our priorities are rooted in, and how we invest our time, energy, and affections. The sources suggest that many people's priorities are formed from an "unbalanced attachment to... the things of this world," where faith might be a moral guide but not the defining factor of their heart's desires. The invitation is to shift from this self-defined focus to a relationship with Christ that is all-encompassing and transformative.

2. What does "becoming rich toward God" mean, and how does it contrast with worldly wealth?

"Becoming rich toward God" means seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. This contrasts sharply with worldly wealth, which is characterized as "transient and insubstantial," having "no enduring value." The sources emphasize that while worldly possessions may be useful, they are not ends in themselves. True richness lies in an authentic relationship with God and aligning one's life with His will, recognizing that earthly life is temporary and our ultimate destination is heaven. As St. Ambrose notes, "virtue alone is the companion of the dead, mercy alone follows us, which gains for the dead an everlasting habitation."

3. What is the significance of the Book of Ecclesiastes and Psalm 90 in understanding the theme of earthly possessions?

The Book of Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth) and Psalm 90 both underscore the transience and futility of human toil and earthly possessions when God is not the central context of our lives. Ecclesiastes highlights the "vanity and meaninglessness" of worldly things, emphasizing their vapor-like, non-enduring nature. Psalm 90 echoes this theme of human transience in the face of God's eternity, pleading for wisdom to live in a way that truly pleases God and brings lasting joy. Both readings serve as reminders that authentic fulfillment cannot be found without God and that our lives must be understood within the context of His care.

4. How does Jesus' teaching on possessions, particularly the parable of the rich fool, challenge our perspective?

Jesus directly challenges our view and relationship with "the passing things of this world." The parable of the rich fool illustrates the tragic end of someone who believes their life consists only of possessions, revealing the folly of storing up treasure for oneself without being "rich in what matters to God." This teaching highlights that life does not consist of possessions, no matter how abundant, and warns against greed, urging a shift in focus from temporal accumulation to eternal values.

5. What is the "powerful antidote" Saint Paul offers in his Letter to the Colossians for earthly desires?

Saint Paul offers the antidote of actively "seeking the things that are above" if one has been "raised with Christ." This involves putting to death "whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry)." It means stripping off the "old self" and clothing oneself with the "new self," which is renewed in knowledge according to the image of its Creator. Essentially, Paul urges believers to align their understanding of life and values with God's, as communicated through Jesus' life and words, shifting focus from the temporal to the eternal.

6. What are the two primary ways to "seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness" according to the sources?

The two primary ways are:

1. **A sacramental life:** Through God's grace in the sacraments, divine life is received into our souls, making us "truly 'rich in God.'" Sacraments are considered essential for Christian transformation, enabling believers to become Christ-like and understand their identity as children of God.
2. **Attentive development of virtues (theological and natural):** This specifically emphasizes the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, which are gifts from God that dispose us to live in relationship with the Holy Trinity. They are foundational for overcoming the battle between flesh and spirit, responding to the call to holiness, and enabling sacrificial love.

7. How do the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity contribute to living an authentic human life?

The theological virtues are gifts from God that relate directly to Him and dispose us to live in relationship with the Holy Trinity. They are the foundation of our moral life and essential for overcoming the battle between flesh and spirit.

- **Faith** enables us to see God in all things, believe His word even in hard moments, becoming an anchor that enriches us with spiritual treasure.
- **Hope** allows us to look to the future with trust in God's promises, lifting our eyes to heaven and wanting God more than anything else.
- **Charity (Love)** gives us the ability to live sacrificially and love completely, like Jesus. Divine love frees us from disordered desires and selfishness, fostering a deep hunger for communion with God. These virtues collectively enable us to live in accord with our nature, created in God's image and likeness, leading to freedom, joy, and peace.

8. What is the ultimate message regarding our purpose and destination, and how is the Mass connected to this?

The ultimate message is that our true treasure is found not in earthly possessions but in our relationship with God and living according to His will. We are invited to live with wisdom, acknowledging our mortality while holding the hope of the life to come, with heaven as our final destination. Jesus is the perfect model for this, showing us how to grow more into God's image. The Mass is deeply connected to this purpose as it offers a foretaste of heaven. Every Mass renews Christ's sacrifice and self-gift, and through the Eucharist, we are united with Jesus and with each other, initiating the perfect communion of life and love that awaits us in heaven.