

Fr. Martin's Reflection – July 31, 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Our readings this week are filled with human questions and divine answers. Our first reading asks the question, 'what's the point?' What's the point in all this hard work, accumulating all these riches, both property and wealth, and then leave them to someone else that has not earned it or worked for it? The writer of Ecclesiastes sees this as an injustice and simply pointless. Obviously, the writer has been schooled from a very early age that wealth and riches are what is important. The more wealth and property you own the more powerful you will be, and others will be envious of you and want to emulate your life. So, he worked hard all his life and accumulated all this wealth and still was not happy, truth be told he had become very angry and disillusioned because after all his hard work he was not going to enjoy it because his life was about to end. He spent all his youthful life living to work, rather than working to live. His bank account was stuffed full, but his heart was empty of joy or love.

In our gospel Jesus meets that same age-old human problem – money and property – family inheritance. We see how it can divide and destroy families. Jesus wants the young man to look at it differently – how the desire for money and wealth can isolate us, make us hard of heart and selfish. In the parable that Jesus uses, we find a man so isolated that he has a conversation with himself, affirming himself that he needs no one. He looks at *his* crops, *his* grain, *his* full barns, *his* goods. He thinks that he owns his soul and his own future. His world is seen in terms of what he owns.

The sad reality is that this rich man is dead already. His world is unrelated to the fortune or fate of any other human being. He decorates his grave with his own possessions which give him a loveless advantage: he thinks that they will insure his future when in fact they will go to anyone but him.

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, goes beyond the physical riches, he focuses on what is in the heart too. He tells us to "kill everything in you that belongs only to earthly life: fornication, impurity, guilty passion, evil desires and especially greed, which is the same thing as worshipping a false god. And never tell each other lies." Paul goes on to say that if we do this then we are "stripping off your old behavior with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator; and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised or the uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free. There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything." Christ was filled to the brim with love, overflowing, and poured out. He spent his whole life sharing his talent for forgiveness, his insight, his love, his energy, his imagination, his prayer, his stories. All these qualities create new life for others. Jesus keeps nothing to himself because he regards nothing as his: he says that everything he is and has comes from the Father. What Jesus owns; he owes.

Dear friends, let us look at everything we have as a gift from God, and let us not see them as ours alone, but must-share gifts for all.

Fr. Martin