

Riches: Blessings or Vanities?

"If the Lord has gifted you with riches, it is to do lots of good things for others in His name" (Pope Francis Tweets, August 28, 2018)

The Eucharistic celebration- the highest form of prayer, is a special moment in which God speaks to us in different ways, namely, the songs, the prayers, and the readings. The word of God we experience through these encourages us in the good we do and challenges us to overcome our lives' weaknesses. This change cannot happen if we do not have the disposition to be present and participate fully in the liturgy. This worthwhile disposition to the word of God helps us to *"seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God..."* as our second reading (Colossians 3:1 – 5, 9 –11) for this Sunday invites us.

In our first reading, the book of Ecclesiastes (1:2;2:21-23), one of the wisdom books, it admonishes us on the reality that nothing is permanent. It describes both our life successes and failures as vanities. The tone of this message can make one begin to think that all our toil and labor are in vain. But the main message here is to be constantly mindful of the temporality of everything before us. Similarly, the Parable of the rich fool in the Gospel (Luke 2:13 – 21) brings up the question of Jesus detesting riches and seeing them as mere vanity than a blessing. Is this true? No! Instead, Jesus wants to bring to our awareness the destructive dangers of riches, which do not undermine the blessings they bring.

Jesus wants us to reflect on two things about riches: How we acquire and use them. These two things determine if riches become a blessing or vanity. First, we must ask ourselves: What do we have, and how did we acquire them? Second, how do we use the riches we have acquired? Does our wealth make us arrogant and proud? Are we unduly attached to riches that we evaluate our lives by what? Are we wasteful and extravagant or self-centered and mean with our wealth? Do we remember that the more riches we have, the more opportunities to win God's blessings with them? We pray that the good Lord will give us the wisdom to acquire and correctly use the riches he has given us so that they become for us sources of blessing. Amen.