

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time [a]

July 27, 2008

Readings

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

Romans 8:28-30

Matthew 13:44-52 or Matthew 13:44-46

Calendar

July 31: Feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Jesuits

Quotes

Do not let a desire for wealth cause you to become so consumed by your work that you prevent happiness for yourself and your family.

Thich Nhat Hanh

There is more to life than merely increasing its speed.

Gandhi

Our examination of conscience now comes to the life style of all: bishops, priests, religious and lay people. In the case of needy peoples it must be asked whether belonging to the Church places people on a rich island within an ambient of poverty. In societies enjoying a higher level of consumer spending, it must be asked whether our life style exemplifies that sparingness with regard to consumption which we preach to others as necessary in order that so many millions of hungry people throughout the world may be fed.

1971 Synod of Bishops, Justice in the World, 48

Completing the unfinished business of the American experiment will call for new forms of cooperation and partnership among those whose daily work is the source of the prosperity and justice of the nation. The United States prides itself on both its competitive sense of initiative and its spirit of teamwork. Today a greater spirit of partnership and teamwork is needed; competition alone will not do the job. It has too many negative consequences for family life, the economically vulnerable, and the environment. Only a renewed commitment by all to the common good can deal creatively with the realities of international interdependence and economic dislocations in the domestic economy. The virtues of good citizenship require a lively sense of participation in the commonwealth and of having obligations as well as rights within it. The nation's economic health depends on strengthening these virtues among all its people, and on the development of institutional arrangements supportive of these virtues.

US Bishops, Economic Justice for All, #296

All the things in this world are gifts of God, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love to God more readily. ... We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a deeper response to our life in God.

St. Ignatius Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, Contemporary Reading by David Fleming SJ

... when the believer enters into a profound relationship with God, he cannot be content with a mediocre life under the banner of a minimalistic ethic and a superficial religiosity.

Pope Benedict XVI, 10 July 2005

Thoughts for your consideration

The merchant gets excited about finding the perfect pearl.
The finder of the lost treasure does everything to buy the field.
Solomon desires an understanding heart to govern God's people well.

What do you get excited about? What do you worry about? What do you desire?
In our American culture, some people worry about money and security, especially as our economy seems to be in recession and prices seem to be going up. In our culture some people worry about issues of self esteem or personal gratification or sexual fulfillment.

What do you get excited about?
Do you get excited about the vision and freedom of Jesus Christ?
Do you get liberated by the challenging teachings of Jesus Christ?
Do you get excited about the social teaching of the church?

Some have referred to Catholic Social Teaching as the Church's "best kept secret."
I suspect we may want to call it a "pearl of great price" and a "found treasure."

What would you ask for if you were Solomon?
Solomon in today's first reading seems to be free enough not to ask for a long life, or riches, or the life of his enemies. The teachings of Jesus are meant to lead us to this sort of liberation – liberation from greed, selfishness, and violence. They are to be a source of life and liberation for the whole world, especially the poor. The parables of Jesus invite us to focus on what is really most important and not get distracted by all the other desires and confusions.

Today's parable might remind us of the numerous recent high profile stories of greed in the mortgage business or the investment business. People get excited about making money or corporate success or status and they do almost anything to get the results which they want. In the process they forget to focus on the common good.

Today's parable might remind us of the international policies and values that have led our nation into war and into the misuse of our earth's resources. In the process we might forget to focus on the common good and those desires that are really most important.

Questions for Reflection in your Faith Sharing Group

When in your life have you gotten most excited about something?
Where did this desire lead you?
How did it affect others?

+++++

When in your life have your selfish desires gotten you into trouble?
What happened? How did it affect others?

Actions - Links

The **American Human Development Project** has been working on measuring human well-being using an aid agency approach to measuring well-being. They have come up with interesting results about the well-being of people in the United States concerning things like education and health care and the economy. "The US finds itself ranked 42nd in global life expectancy and 34th in survival of infants to age. Suicide and murder are among the top 15 causes of death and although the US is home to just 5 per cent of the global population it accounts for 24 per cent of the world's prisoners." [Thursday, July 17, 2008, [The Independent/UK](#)] For more info go to <http://measureofamerica.org/> See how your congressional district looks compared to others. Use the well-o-meter to see how your situation compares to others.

Crazy Facts

The **American Human Development Project** reports that in the United States by the end of fourth grade, African American and Latino children, and children of all races who are living in poverty, are two years behind their more affluent, predominantly white peers in reading and math. They have fallen three years behind by eighth grade, and four years behind by twelfth grade.

Prayers of Intercession

Response: Lord, give us wise and understanding hearts.

Lord, we are people with so many varied desires. We pray....

Lord, we live in a world with so many different people. We pray....

Lord, we live in a world with so much misunderstanding and violence. We pray....

Lord, we live in a world distorted by human greed and selfishness. We pray....

Lord, we live in a world with inequality and injustice. We pray....

Prayer - Meditation

Prayer for All of Humanity

I pray for all of humanity to one day feel the pulse of the Mother Earth in their feet as they tread. I pray for mankind to find the faith to believe in the messages carried by their dreams and to see beyond the visible world. I pray that everyone I come in contact with can walk away with much, or at least some, of the happiness that lives within me. I pray for peace, acceptance, and tolerance for all who express their love for the higher power (whatever that name may be). Most of all, I pray for an end to the violence and depravity that darkens many souls. Peace be with us all!

Posted at <http://www.beliefnet.com/prayeroftheday>