

# Eighteenth Sunday of ORDINARY TIME (Year C)

First: Ecc 1:2; 2:21-23; Second: Col 3:1-5.9-11; Gospel: Lk 12:13-21

## THEME of the READINGS

The texts of the liturgy this Sunday propose two ways of living and being in the world. There is the way of living of the old man, and that of the new man (second reading), there is the man who seeks earthly things and the man who seeks heavenly things (second reading), the one for whom all things are futile and the one for whom everything is God's providence. The Gospel, in turn, contrasts the life of the man who hoards possessions and stores up treasures for himself with that of the man who bases his existence on the Lord, and becomes rich in the sight of God.

## DOCTRinal MESSAGE

**Living for one's self.** This is a way of being in the world, of fulfilling one's existence over the years that span from birth to death. The ego becomes the point of reference for everything. Knowledge, work, efforts and their good results appear to be fleeting and vain before the ego. If the human being is doomed to die, what is the point of having knowledge, of working, if he cannot triumph over his mortality, his

immersion in nothingness? Everything is futile, like smoke that is blown away by the wind. When the ego is the center of one's life, we have the old man, incapable of coming out of the darkness of his impenetrable sphere on his own, more and more submerged in the abyss of vice and sin, with his gaze increasingly focused on the things of this world, without the possibility of lifting it up to heaven. We have the old man, because in a way, in his life he repeats the very ancient history of the first man, Adam, of the taste for sin and the original fall. However, when left to its own devices, the ego is extremely poor, for it gives priority to possession and appearance. Is there anything more fleeting than these two realities? How can one base one's existence on something that is here today and gone tomorrow? How can one look death in the face, when the great values that have governed one's life have been material goods and appearances, which are forbidden from crossing the threshold of the hereafter? Truly, to those who live for themselves we may apply Jesus' words in the parable contained in the text of the Gospel, "Fool! This very night you will be asked for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?" This is he who stores up treasures for himself, who centers his life on himself.

**Living in God's presence.** In truth, God is not the enemy of the ego, or of personal fulfillment. Not at all! However, eternal wisdom teaches us that our own fulfillment consists in living for God, by living in the sight of God. In God's eyes, work and knowledge have a providential meaning and destiny, beyond the limits of the earthly sphere. Everything that one does for God in this world, transcends and dwells in him, purified and elevated, in God's eternal dwelling. The new man lives before and for God. The new man was re-made by Christ in his image and likeness through baptism. He was circumcised, not in his flesh but in his heart, and in living before God he experiences death without fear. Death is more than an absurd and senseless end: it is a door to a new existence in which he already participates, albeit it in a very poor and elementary way. This is why the new man has his feet firmly planted on the ground and on the tasks of this world, but his gaze and his heart look

upwards, to heaven, towards which he walks with confidence and hope. Those who live for God do not estrange themselves from the world, they do not despise it, for it is the home that the Father has given them to live in. They work like all the rest, they expend their energies to produce wealth, but their heart is pure and unselfish, and they know full well that the goods of this world have a universal destiny, and cannot be unfairly hoarded by just a few. Instead of telling themselves, "Rest, eat, drink, feast," they think about how to help all people, especially those who are closest to them, to have enough food, to have their rest, and be able to healthily enjoy whatever is needed for a banquet.

## **PASTORal SUGGESTIONS**

**The homo oeconomicus does not have a future.** We often classify people according to certain aspects that characterize them. Thus we speak of homo faber, for example, to underscore someone's manual skills, or homo cogitans to emphasize man's vocation as a thinker. With the expression homo oeconomicus, we refer to the type of person who focuses on money and well-being. Well, such a person has no future. There are people who say, "With money you can do anything you want; money opens all doors." That is not true. Money cannot buy happiness, although at times it can make you happy. Money cannot buy love; at most it will buy you a night of passion or an ephemeral and frustrating affair. Money does not make you virtuous; rather, it often opens the door to vice. Whether we realize it or not, we all want a happier future, but we won't be able to find this future in a hefty bank account. You will find it inside yourself, in the inner sanctum of your conscience, at peace with yourself and with God. The homo oeconomicus does not have a future because he is not a citizen of heaven, he has no passport, and a bank account is useless in the face of death and God's judgment. Why not turn the homo oeconomicus into a homo pneumaticus, into a man who is enlightened, guided and conformed by the action of the Holy Spirit? It is

not easy, but it is possible, it is desirable. Many have done it. Try it, if you have not done it yet. Urge others to try it.

**Does it make sense to change direction?** The two ways of living that we have discussed thus far are like a highway. The two lanes are separate, and there is no possibility of changing the direction in which you are going whenever you want to. The lanes go either in one direction or in the other. This makes drivers feel much safer, it makes driving easier and less tiring, one can drive faster... In general, one drives comfortably, although special care will have to be taken when going around a bend, not to exceed the speed limit, and not to be overcome by fatigue. I advance, I head towards Babylon, I see that I am not alone but that many more people are heading in the same direction as I. I think that I have selected well the city of my dreams and that it will be most enjoyable to live in it, with well-to-do people. Every now and then I notice that there is a sign that reads "U-turn permitted ahead". I have seen that some have gotten off the highway and have tried to change direction. At first, my reaction was, "What an idiot! Does it make sense to change direction?" Then, when faced with other similar signs, or at unexpected times, I thought about the people who got off the highway. Why did they get off? Are they weird? Did they think that they were going in the wrong direction? Did they realize that Babylon is not an island of happiness? The truth is that the seed of doubt has been planted inside me. What should I do? I encourage you to change direction, to take the lane that leads to Jerusalem, to do it at the next exit, without waiting for the final one... Don't think that only a few people are heading in that direction. When you change direction, you will realize that there is heavy traffic. Jerusalem is the city of the great God! Jerusalem is the city in which Jesus Christ gave his life for us! Jerusalem is the city of the children of God, the symbol of truth and justice, the symbol of love and solidarity! Jerusalem is the city founded by God for you to live in!

