

17A SML 2020
MT 13:44-46 (short form)

Our Blessed Lord's parables in today's gospel present us with two examples of "carpe diem" moments, two examples to "seize the day!"

A day laborer is working in a field. He is a wage worker; the field does not belong to him. That he is poor is evident from the fact that he sells "everything" he has to buy the field: his broken-down house; its furniture and utensils, a few tools, his donkey.

While he was plowing the field, his plowshare strikes the treasure, probably a large clay jar full of silver coins. He buries his hands forearm deep in the silver coins, and after he has counted it, throws dirt over what he found, looking over his shoulder to make sure no one is watching, and with unspeakable joy, he turns everything he has into cash and buys the field. He's not bothered in the least by having to sell everything he has because his loss is nothing compared to what he will gain! Carpe Diem! Seize the Day!

In the second parable, everything shifts. The actor is not a poor person but a wealthy merchant. This man is not described as a small shopkeeper, but a wholesale merchant, a man who

imports and exports. The story takes place not in the country, but in the city, perhaps in the course of a trading journey, probably overseas somewhere. The merchant is a specialist in pearls; sought after in antiquity; they were then what big diamonds are today. Immense sums were paid for the most perfect of pearls.

One day, the merchant comes across a pearl of unusual size and perfection. The dealer is asking quite a bit for it, but, holding that pearl up to the light, the merchant knows that in the right place and at the right time he could get a price for that pearl that would make your head swim. So he sells all that he has, and buys the pearl, because it is the deal of a lifetime! Carpe Diem! Seize the Day!

Jesus is the model for the Carpe Diem disciple. As God on earth, Our Blessed Lord created masterpieces of conversion that touched the deepest part of souls, but as Man, Jesus was also pragmatic. He understood time constraints. And because He knew His time on earth was limited, and that He often would not have the opportunity to encounter someone again, He seized the day! Each of His miracles, of course, are examples of His acting on the carpe diem moments, but there

were also other non-miracle “seize the day” moments, which we could seize just as well:

- ✓ Matthew at his custom’s post, hated by his brethren for the job he also hated, that just furthers the Roman oppression, and hating his mercenary self for groveling over taxes and pressing the people to pay; Jesus seizes the day and calls Matthew to a job that pays nothing money wise, but the last thing Matthew wanted was money. Why? Because money doesn’t buy happiness.
- ✓ The woman at the well, who was clearly looking for love in all the wrong places; married seven times and the guy she was living with, she didn’t even bother to marry; Jesus seizes the day and gives this woman some great advice!
- ✓ Zacchaeus, short little runt, would-be Napoleon complex kind of a guy, another tax collector, hated because of the job he also hated, always kicked to the curb because of his size. Jesus seizes the day and asks to have dinner with Him.

These carpe diem moments were not unique to Our Blessed Lord. Out of the gate of discipleship, Philip had an eye for “carpe diem” moments, which prompted the Apostle Philip to offer his cheerful “Come and see” (JN 1:46) to Nathanael.

The Acts of the Apostles, perhaps the most “active” book in the Bible (hence the name of the book, Acts), spills over with carpe diem moments. Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (AA 8:26-40) is a great example of one such moment that bore

immediate fruit. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Philip raced up to the chariot of the Ethiopian, who was providentially reading an Old Testament passage from Isaiah. Sensing Philip's zeal, the Ethiopian asked Philip to interpret the passage for him. Inspired by Philip's teaching, the Ethiopian requested to pull over his chariot in order that he could be baptized in what was probably a puddle. Then in rather remarkable fashion, Philip departed from the man. But the eunuch went on his way "rejoicing," changed forever.

Later in Acts, Paul, alive with the Holy Spirit was given the opportunity to introduce Jesus' Resurrection in Athens, which teemed with statues and objects deifying foreign gods. Paul found the common thread that linked them and used it to ingratiate himself to them and lead them to truth. ". . . For as I walked around and looked carefully at your shrines, I even discovered an altar inscribed, 'to an Unknown God.'" (AA 17:23) Paul connected the dots directly to Jesus Christ, and earned Christ's first Greek followers, Dionysius and Damaris and others, that day.

This common thread "carpe diem" approach is more important than ever in leading our secular society to the Faith. Unfortunately, an all-too-common combination of worldliness,

comfort, timidity and lack of desire to engage souls has stops the modern day disciple from sincerely attempting to lead others to Christ and His Church, no matter the time or day or situation. Or, it may also be a case of not being able to give what they themselves do not have.

Carpe Diem moments die when we neglect the demands of growing in our own spiritual life. If we are not filled with a joy and willingness to act, stemming from a deep prayer life and a relationship with Jesus Christ, it would seem these carpe diem moments would rarely occur. A quote from Fulton Sheen applies here:

I have found that it takes some time to catch fire in prayer. This has been one of the advantages of making a holy hour. It is not so brief as to prevent the soul from collecting itself and shaking off the multitudinous distractions of the world. Treasure in the Clay, p. 190

Here is an example of a modern day “carpe diem” disciple. Many of you may know my sister Joanne. She is a local obstetrician. When a parishioner comes up to me and says, “Father Dan, your sister is my obstetrician,” I just smile and say, “My sister will know you far better than I ever will.” Joanne has a “carpe diem” knack for sending cards in the mail with a

note written in each card. I know she has sent cards to many, how many I don't know. I know she mails cards to parents of a priest friend of ours who lost his brother almost two years ago. I texted our friend to ask about how many cards she sent. He said his parents have received 60 cards in 16 months - 60 "carpe diem" moments of action in 16 months, and this just to one of many. If Hallmark were not privately owned, I'd buy Hallmark stock 😊

St. Philip the Apostle, St. Paul, St. Philip Neri, St. John Bosco, St. John Paul the Great all had an eye for "carpe diem" moments. "Carpe diem" moments make saints!