Archbishop’s Homily for Announcement Weekend
Detachment - A foretaste of heaven

In today’s Gospel, why does Jesus seem to tell us that bad things are good and good things are bad? Is it bad to be happy or content?

Jesus is illustrating for us that worldly goods are only truly good when they are used for eternal ends. This is an expansion on the words from the Old Testament reading.

The first reading from the book of Jeremiah uses these words, “Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord.”

Such people have no room for God in their lives as they look at what they have and believe they can provide for themselves. They fail to recognize that everything comes from God and are blinded by a false sense of self-sufficiency. It is the opposite of what the Beatitudes in St. Matthew’s Gospel refers to as “poverty of spirit.” It is as though they are saying, “I’m all set here, God. You can go help someone else.”

This is illustrated even further in this Gospel passage, which is the version of the Beatitudes that St. Luke provides. Jesus promises blessings on the one hand and woes on the other. These pair up by providing contrasting attitudes and outcomes.

Let’s look at the first pair of Beatitudes/woes: “Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.” This is opposed by the following, “But woe to you are rich, for you have received yours consolation.”

Sometimes people misquote St. Paul’s letter to Timothy when they attribute to St. Paul the expression, “Money is the root of all evil.” That actually is not what he wrote! The passage is, “For the love of money is the root of all evil.”

This helps us to understand what Jesus means in the Gospel today. He is not condemning the rich, he is condemning the rich who put all their trust in their wealth. By clinging to their wealth, they already have received their reward and it will be a liability in the afterlife.

So, how can we, who live in the wealthiest country in the history of mankind, avoid such a fate? It begins by practicing good stewardship and a healthy
detachment from worldly things. Don’t spend time thinking about all the things we can buy or all the things we want. Begin with gratitude! Acknowledge God’s blessings. And prayerfully ask the Lord what he wants us to do with these blessings, which are his gifts to us.

Another concrete way to practice this kind of detachment and good stewardship is to share with others. Today, we are launching our Annual Catholic Appeal. This appeal directly supports numerous ministries within our archdiocese, including:

- Youth and campus ministry designed to help form the next generation of Catholics;
- Family life ministry to help parents as they do their critical job of raising their children to know, love and serve God, while also showing their children an example of a loving marriage;
- And adult faith formation to help adults know better the depths and riches of our Catholic faith and how to live it each day.

So many of the good things happening in our archdiocese are made possible by your generosity. Please take the time between this weekend and next to pray about how God has blessed your life and how he is inviting you to practice good stewardship with his gifts to you by participating in the Annual Catholic Appeal.

This appeal directly supports the many ministries and programs our parish relies upon. They cannot continue without your support.

Keeping in proper perspective the source and purpose of the good things we enjoy in life, we must prepare our souls for the world to come. That is what will help us at the end our lives not to cling desperately to this passing world, but to live with purpose and happiness that has no end.