

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday- C 2013  
Deacon Pat Hall

*Wisdom 18:6-9; Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19; Luke 12:32-48*

*Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/081113.cfm>*

*Do not be afraid any longer, little flock...for where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.*

Jesus' parable starts off reassuring, but then later warns us about severe punishment, or maybe only light beatings. In between those statements, Jesus instructs us how to be the vigilant servant awaiting the master's return. But Jesus just doesn't instruct us, he models that service for us. He is the master who would have **us** recline at table and proceed to wait on **us**.

Our selection from Luke today directly follows Jesus' preaching on God's care for us, his loving gift.

*Notice the ravens: they do not sow or reap; they have neither storehouse nor barn, yet God feeds them. How much more important are you than birds!  
Notice how the flowers grow. They do not toil or spin. But I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of them (Lk 12: 24, 27)*

This is about receiving gift and sharing gift. The beatings are reserved for those who do not imitate Jesus' example. The beatings are for those who hoard for themselves. Some hoard out of greed; some hoard out of fear. But it is clear that those who hoard have cut themselves off from the joy of God.

That heavenly joy is promised to those who have shared the Master's gift. Yet he comes at some unknown hour. This has the ring of Advent about it. In Advent, we set aside a whole season in preparation for the coming of the Master. We understand Jesus' coming in three ways: the memorial of his incarnation at Bethlehem, the anticipation of his second coming at the end of time, and of his coming into our hearts.

*For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.*

This is my hope. But since I sin, I am afraid of my just punishment. As such, with God's grace, I try to avoid sin. I try to follow the rules. I try not to offend the Ten Commandments. I try to comply with the precepts of the Church.

- You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.*
- You shall confess your sins at least once a year.*

*-You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.*

*-You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.*

*-And... you shall help to provide for the needs of the Church. (CCC 2042-2043)*

Even with my scrupulous observance, I am still anxious. In the end, I do not have the power to secure my joy. While I may not be able to take it, to make it happen, I am able to receive it, receive it as God's loving gift... and having received it, to share it. Because it was likely through someone else, that I received God's grace, and likely through me, that others will receive. By virtue of us being created as his children, we are called to be God's very instruments of grace.

It is to be in relationship with God and each other that we were created. We are family. As we look at our own individual families, we understand the necessity of rules and discipline that support the family structure. We obey our parents. We respect our siblings. We do our chores. But it is in sharing our love that eternal relationships are forged. I use the word "forge" because the image of molten metal from a crucible being poured out into solid castings is the right word to describe our sacrificial giving to each other. As we look back on our lives, wasn't it the "hard" giving that brings us the most smiles? I look at the bonds that were created when I paced all night long with a colicky baby on my shoulder. I still remember my prayer: "Oh, God, please let her go to sleep, please let him go to sleep." And yet my love deepened for them. That is the love I revel in. That is the love I can take with me when I pass to the other side. That is the heavenly love that breaks bright into our world.

It is in sacrificial loving that I have found lasting joy, that by giving profoundly, I become part of whom I am giving to. In short, I find joy when I give until it hurts.

For instance, like most of you, I receive lots of requests from different charities. I pick and choose. Some that I find interesting, I may send a check for 25 bucks. Now they're happy to receive that because if there are a thousand others like me, that could become significant. But in the end, I don't have a deep sense of connection with that charity or the other.

But when I give a monthly check to a charity, I get a sense of belonging to something, especially when I read their monthly newsletter. I feel like I am part of their success. And the more I am able to contribute or participate, especially if it is difficult, the more joy I find in their success and feel more like I am part of a "we", that I am part of who they are ... and they-me. Through gift, the Holy Spirit moves through us and makes us one.

I see much of this symbolized by the rosary decade I carry on my key chain. It was made by one of our parishioners. I won't say who it is here. I can tell you later personally.

This decade was made of beautiful stones with a long name of which I've been told twice, but still can't remember. The beauty of it reflects the love that went into its creation. The artist did not know who would end up with this rosary, but it certainly reflects her love of God.

I bought the decade at our Women's Sodality Sale. They had gotten together to rally around the capital needs of our parish. They spent a lot of precious time and resources to put together something that would support our parish needs. My artist donated the decade to the cause along with other articles representing hours upon hours of effort. And while the ladies gave until it hurt, it sounded like a whole lot of laughter and fun to me. When they announced their quite impressive profits to be given to the parish, I could feel that decade in my pocket and say, "I was part of that."

We, as your parish family, invite you to feel like you are a "part of that". Bring your heart.

When you see our children receive First Communion, can you feel like you are a "part of that"? It may be by volunteering to be a catechist, or contributing to the salaries of our staff, or by responding with supplies.

When you hear the chorus of praise echoing through our worship space, can you feel like you are a "part of that"?

When St. Mary's distributes food to hungry neighbors or you see neighborhood children coming to St. Mary's to play, practice basketball, or rehearse in our new Eastside Neighborhood Chorus, can you feel through your support of St. Mary's ministries, that you are a "part of that"?

Next week's fundraiser, our Polish Wedding Dinner, is the ultimate example of people coming together in sacrifice and effort, building relationships along the way and all for the love of God.

In anticipation of next summer and feeling the cool air about us in worship, I look forward to saying, "I'm a part of that."

What we offer you here at St. Mary's is treasure. Our parish family is the instrument of God's gift of loving joy. We experience that most intimately when we come to this altar to receive him, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity.

*For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.*

What Jesus asks of you ... is nothing less ... than your heart.