



February 27, 2011 The Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time

But seek first the kingdom of God—Matthew 6:33

Dear Friends;

It seems as if every time I pass the gas station, the price has gone up another several cents. Some are predicting that we will be paying five dollars per gallon by next year!

Whether it is driven by speculation, manipulation or other forces; gas prices affect most the working poor. More of their salaries are consumed in getting to and from work. Increasingly more people are living from hand to mouth. And in the rest of the world it is creating instability as the cost of food, clothing and housing is influenced by gas prices.

Jesus lived in a culture where most people existed from hand to mouth. It was an agricultural subsistence economy. Each day people needed to be concerned from where their next meal would come. There were the few that had vast sums of wealth but not most people.

For most people, in Jesus' society, real wealth consisted in networks of support—family and friends. Love was not understood as an emotion but an attachment to the group. Love was the binding force linking people together. Hating was detachment or alienation from the group. One could not be linked to two groups.

In today's Gospel passage from Matthew, Jesus uses the example of a servant with two masters. He was thinking of the difficult situation when a slave was bequeathed by a father to two sons. It would be almost impossible for the slave to divide his service between the two in an equal manner. The slave will naturally prefer one or the other.

We cannot serve two masters either. We must choose who we would serve—the Gospel or our appetites for comfort, entertainment or wealth. If we choose God then we are called not to worry. God is a patron who knows his dependents' needs and will fulfill them. If we choose our appetites, we choose a master who will never let us rest—driving us always for more. The choice is ours.

St Francis de Sales (a great Catholic reformer of the Counter [Catholic] Reformation period) calls us to place our trust fully in God. He says:

In all your affairs, rely wholly on God's providence...Intimate little children, who with one hand hold fast to their father, and with the other hand gather strawberries along the hedges. So too, as you gather and handle the goods of this world with one hand, you must with the other always hold fast the hand of your Heavenly Father, turning yourself towards him from time to time to see if your actions and occupations be pleasing to him. About all things take heed that you never leave his hand or think to gather more or to gain some advantage. For should he forsake you, you would not be able to go a step further with out falling to the ground.

Today let us choose once again the reign of God and God's holiness. Let us experience the wealth of solidarity, compassion and forgiveness as we are joined as one in Christ's Body.

Peace,

Fr Ron