



## August 1, 2010 Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

“Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one’s life does not consist of possessions.” Luke 12: 15

Dear Friends;

Enron, Bernie Maydoff, the mortgage and bank industries meltdown—we are all paying the price for those who did not bother to see how their actions impact the lives of others. We have had a religious belief in a system of economics that says we must keep our eye only on the bottom line, and we need not regulate markets or financial industries. They will mystically correct themselves. I think we know better now.

Theologian Paul Tillich once stated that there are no atheists; we all have gods that we have set up as the idols whom we serve. Jesus tells us to avoid that greed which is idolatry. Idolatry is the sin of putting something else in the place of God. The idol demands our attention, constant devotion and will not let us rest. It can be anything—an addiction, sports, pleasure, possessions, entertainment, gossip, self-righteous religiosity etc. The idol is focused always on self—my perspective, my wants, my needs, my desires, my beliefs, my pain etc.

In Jesus’ parable (in today’s Gospel) the rich man reveals his greedy all consuming idolatry. He considers the bountiful harvest only in self-defining terms—“what shall I do...I do not have space... I shall do... I shall tear down...my harvest...my barns...my grain...myself.” The man’s self-focused plan is then interrupted by God.

God says, “You fool” to whom does all of this wealth belong? The fool would answer “Me.” Psalm 24 answers “*the earth is the Lord’s and all it holds, the world and those who live there.*” The greedy man will have no spiritual benefit from it.

Barbara Reid comments that this parable cuts two ways. To those who are blessed with abundance, hard questions of greediness versus the just distribution of resources for the common good must be asked. To those who are on the underside of privilege there is the encouragement to speak out and unmask injustice and greed while not giving in to violence which is futile in achieving justice.

Ultimately we must unseat the idols of the solely self-defined person, and an economics which does not consider the good of every person. Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador, El Salvador preached in a country which at that time was owned by a handful of families and the multitude were trapped in grinding poverty. He said in 1978:

“We must overturn so many idols, the idol of self, first of all, so that we can be humble, and only from our humility can learn to be redeemers, can learn to work together in the way the world really needs. Liberation that means revolutions of hate and violence and takes the lives of others or abases the dignity of others cannot be true liberty. *True liberty does violence to self and like Christ, who disregarded that he was sovereign, becomes a slave for others.*”

The financial crisis of these last years has shaken our faith in ourselves and our economic systems. We now have the opportunity to reevaluate what we thought was important and reshape our priorities that they might include more the love of others. The common good is the only bottom line that counts with God.

Peace,

*Fr Ron*