

Homily. 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. C. 3/4 August 2019.

When the preacher in the First Reading speaks to us of vanity, he uses that word in a way that reminds us that all of our efforts to amass more things and more money must inevitably end in pointlessness, worthlessness and futility. This has been so because, ultimately, our lives and our destiny aren't ours to control or to dictate. The recent sudden and devastating stroke of a friend of mine and the number of funerals I've lately had cause to lead have brought this message home afresh. Even beyond that, a cursory look at how people's lives end up ought make plain to us all the vanity of living when focused solely on the passion to own and possess more.

When the love of money and things has us by our heart, then as St. Paul teaches, we've given ourselves over to idol worship and false gods. The trouble with these false gods and idols is that they're cold comfort indeed, powerless to help us when we most need the warmth of a loving touch and the caring words and deeds of warmly loving persons. What's more, the security that these false gods promised us can't be given. In handing ourselves, our time, energy and talent over to such things, we've let ourselves be deceived by them. When we most need security and care they're found wanting, leaving us both alone and in cold, lonely despair.

Perhaps the best way to think about the ever passing goods of this world is for us to make for ourselves a clear distinction in our minds between our wants and our needs, remembering that our needs are few while our wants are limited only by our imaginations.

Like anyone here, I can list many wants, but my needs are fairly simple and few; some friends to share my story and life with, some respect for my human dignity, and something to do contributing to society. Along with these I need enough food, clothing and shelter to keep me going and basic health care to aid me when I become unwell.

The other thing that's very much needed is meaning in my daily living, a purpose to keep me going and strength to stay true to this purpose. This is exactly what our relationship with the one, true and living God offers; a life enriching, lasting relationship with the very source of existence that won't desert or abandon us no matter what comes to pass. I'm convinced that this need is what all of us are deeply, sometimes secretly, seeking.

Doing everything we can to ensure that this vital and needed relationship is kept alive and lively within us is doing what Jesus recommended. It's working on making us richer in the sight of God, even when at the same time it can mean learning to generously give away some of what we've come to possess by sharing our bounty with those who are in need.

So, let's be grateful now for our faith that responds to our deepest need, committing ourselves to strengthening and building up this essential resource for living, sharing it when and however we're able. If we make this our aim then our needs and wants won't become so confused, nor will the false god's idols suck us into their cold careless orbit and vanity.