

HOMILY for 27th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's Readings remind us that everything we have been loaned to us while God expects us to make good use of those gifts & blessings as good stewards. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this new cute story that I'd like to share with you.

After many years apart, two high school friends reunited & discussed their careers. One said he had attended college & worked hard to become a success but had recently fallen on hard times. The other admitted he had dropped out of college his freshman year & was pretty lazy.

The first one said, "So, what have you been doing all these years?"

"Well," the lazy friend answered, "one day I opened my Bible at random, closed my eyes, & dropped my finger on a word. The word was *oil*, so I invested the little money I had in oil & did very well. Later, I opened my Bible again, closed my eyes, & dropped my finger on the word *gold*. So, I invested my oil profits in gold, & those mines really produced. Now, I'm one of the richest men in America!"

The college-educated friend was so impressed that he rushed back to his hotel, grabbed a Gideon Bible, closed his eyes, & dropped his finger on a page. When he opened his eyes, he was horrified to find the words, **Chapter Eleven** (meaning, filing for bankruptcy).

Anyhow, most people assume that everything they have belong to them & God has nothing to do with it because they have earned it or somehow inherited. They have assumed that they have worked hard for it & owned it outright as the Civil Laws might have confirmed it by making them pay taxes for everything. However, they do not realize that everything they have has been loaned out to them by God the Creator in this life. Hopefully they would make good use of it to produce abundantly for the Kingdom of God & help them prepare for the eternal life. That is why they would not be able to take anything of their possessions in this life with them when they die. For everything in this life, once again, is simply a loan to help them prepare for the next life in God's Kingdom. In case we have any doubt about that, this Sunday's First Reading has the following reminder for us, "...My friend has a vineyard on a fertile hillside; he spaded it cleared it of stones, & planted the choicest vines; within it he built a watchtower, & hewed out a wine press. Then he looked for the crop of grapes, but what it yielded was wild grapes."

Evidently we are reminded that the Lord has loaned us our gifts & blessings in this life like a piece of land to produce wonderful results for the Kingdom of God & help us prepare for the eternal life. Unfortunately, things might not turn out the way we would have expected in the end. In fact, things might get sour & bitter like the wild grapes when we search for the end results. We wonder what else we could have done to improve the odds for getting a successful harvest or a good end result. It is hard for us to predict the outcome or tell how things would turn out in the end. All we can do is to work hard & do our best with the gifts & blessings that God has "loaned" us. Then, we let the Lord worry about the end harvest or how things might turn out. For the Lord controls the fate of everything in this life. That way we will not regret about anything or disappoint the Lord in the end. More importantly, we will always remember that God has "loaned" us everything in this life; & it is all up to us to make good use of those divine gifts so that they will produce abundantly for the Kingdom of God & help prepare us for the eternal life.

Unfortunately, most of the rich & the powerful do not realize that secret of life. They have continued to misuse God's blessings for them to benefit themselves & their dissolute lifestyle only, instead of the Kingdom of God. They have acted as if they were the sole owners of those blessings & have not used them to help out the poor & the misfortunate around them. They have continued to accumulate more wealth & power for themselves while mistreating the servants of God & neglecting their duties to the Creator & the Kingdom of God. Indeed, this Sunday's Gospel denounces that terrible mistake of the rich & the powerful & gives them the following warning, "...There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, & built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants & went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But, the tenants seized the servants; one they beat, another they killed, & a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, thinking, 'They will respect my son.' But, when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him & acquire his inheritance.' They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, & killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?" Evidently, the Lord Jesus wants not only the rich & the powerful but also all of us to change how we have acted as stewards of God's blessings for us & how we have treated one another. If no one would be willing to make that important change, the Lord would take away those divine blessings & give them to people who would appreciate & make good use of them. So, let me ask you, "Can you name all the gifts & blessings that God has given you? Have you made good use of God's blessings for you yet?"

Most people do not realize how fortunate they are with all the gifts & blessings that God has granted them. They have kept complaining when something goes wrong in their lives. Or, they have continued to ask for more blessings without trying to pay forward & helping out people who might be less fortunate than them. If we know how blessed we are, we will learn to be grateful & generous & make good use of God's blessings for us as good stewards. In case we have made the same mistake, St. Paul has this reminder for us in today's Second Reading, "...Have no anxiety at all; but in everything, by prayer & petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then, the peace of God will guard your hearts & minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious; if there is any excellence & if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things... Then the God of peace will be with you." St. Paul evidently wants us to have no anxiety & worries about our daily lives. Rather, we should learn to be thankful & put everything in God's hands. Next, we should embrace all the just, pure, lovely, & gracious things & make them part of our lives. Then, the peace of God would reign in our hearts; & we would learn how to be good stewards of God's gifts & blessings for us.

My dear brothers & sisters, everything we have in this life, including our lives & health, has come from God. We have been given those as a loan & have been charged to make good use of them. That way we would produce abundantly for the Kingdom of God & prepare ourselves well for the eternal life in Heaven. If we keep that in mind, we will not make the mistake of the rich & the powerful who think they own everything they have & misuse God's gifts & blessings for them. More importantly, God will multiply God's gifts & blessings for us & reward us abundantly in God's Kingdom.