

18<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Year “C”  
August 3-4, 2019

*This night your life will be demanded of you.*

Readings: Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23; Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11; Luke 12:13-21

For most everyone in the world, it is a most horrifying thought to think that tonight our lives would be demanded of us. Very, very few people know ahead of time the moment that they will die. This is a good thing, because the emotion might be too much to bear. Today’s Gospel starkly reminds us that we know neither the day nor the hour. Certainly, the victims of the senseless shooting in El Paso, TX or Dayton, OH could not possibly have seen this coming.

“It is in regard to death that man's condition is most shrouded in doubt.”<sup>1</sup> Certainly, death is natural, and we know that we are not immortal in the body. Yet, our lives are measured by time, and what is true for most of us is that we do not routinely think that this time will be over today. Some professions risk life and limb practically every day, whether soldiers defending our homeland or firefighters and police officers who daily confront dangers unknown to most of us. Our Catechism wisely reminds us that:

“...remembering our mortality helps us realize that we have only a limited time in which to bring our lives to fulfillment: ‘Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, . . . before the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.’” (Eccl. 12:1,7)<sup>2</sup>

When St. Paul reminded his flock to “think of what is above, not of what is on earth,” we understand the urgency all the more readily. Lives that are fixated on immediate needs, pleasures and desires, become lives cut off from what is our ultimate end. Sadly, it is so easy to become fixated on things of the *flesh*, that term which in effect refers to man in his state of weakness and mortality.

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<sup>1</sup> Gaudium et Spes, paragraph #18.

<sup>2</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. #1007

It can act like a set of blinders, much as you would see on a horse preparing for a race. The horses are protected from seeing anything around them, so that they become fixated solely on what is ahead. For a horse this is useful; they do not become frightened by sudden movements with their limited side vision. But as human beings created in God's image and likeness, the things of the flesh act like blinders, keeping our sights fixated solely on earthly things, thereby missing the ultimate goal, namely our beatitude.

Endowed with "a spiritual and immortal" soul, the human person is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake." From our conception, we are destined for eternal beatitude. We have the ability to direct our lives toward what is true, good and beautiful and in so doing, we set out on the path that leads to true happiness. Too often though, we confuse happiness with pleasure.

This is part of what St. Paul was attacking in the letter to the Colossians. The rich land-owner in the Gospel operated with the same blinders. "I have all I could ever need," he thought. He had stored up his treasure, but he could not see that it was fleeting. I recall the October 1987 stock market crash of 508 points, a 22 % loss, the largest % loss ever in a single day in the USA. Overnight, some lost millions. Our Gospel is telling us that in the same span, our very lives may be asked of us. Jesus is not scaring us, nor am I, but he is offering a sober warning that with eyes fixated on earthly matters, we are blind to the very purpose for which we were created.

Many in our society are completely blind to our final end, and it is to them that Jesus says, "You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you..." We have implanted within us a natural desire for happiness. Saint Augustine could write that "we all want to live happily; in the whole human race there is no one who does not assent to this proposition..."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *De moribus eccl.* 1,3,4

Then, in his *Confessions*:

“How is it, then, that I seek you, Lord? Since in seeking you, my God, I seek a happy life, let me seek you so that my soul may live, for my body draws life from my soul and my soul draws life from you.”<sup>4</sup>

Our readings today give us solid food for thought about the difference between pleasure and happiness, between those things that last and those that fade. We cannot store up earthly treasure with a blind eye to preparing for heaven. To do so is indeed the vanity of all vanities, and God has called us to so much more than that. Let us live our lives with the joy and knowledge that Jesus is indeed our all in all, and the source of all our riches.

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<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, Conf. 10, 20: PL 32, 791, quoted in CCC # 1718