

When Possessions Become Obsessions

By: Fr. Munachi E. Ezeopu, CSSP

A preacher notices a woman in the congregation who begins to weep as soon as he begins to preach. Thinking he has made a big catch he preaches with even greater fervor. The more he preaches, the more the woman cries. Finally, the preaching over, it is time to give testimonies. The preacher points to the woman and says, "Sister, I can see you were mightily moved as we proclaimed the word of God. Now can you please share with us what it is that convicts your spirit so much." the woman hesitates, but the pastor insists so she comes up and takes the microphone. "You see," she begins, "Last year I lost my he-goat, the most precious thing I possessed. I prayed and cried much over it and then I forgot all about it. But as soon as you came out to preach and I saw your goatee, it reminded me all over again of the he-goat. I still cry whenever I remember it." She did not remember one word of what the preacher said.

Possessions are necessary for life. But possessions can assume such an importance in one's life that they become obsessions. When one is so concerned about the things that one could have that one does not have, so much so that one can no longer hear the urgent call of God, then one has indeed got one's priorities all mixed up. Such is the man in today's gospel who asks Jesus to come and make his brother give him his share of the family inheritance. Jesus is not against him having more wealth, nor is he against justice being done between him and his brother. Jesus is rather disappointed that after listening to all his preaching, the first concern of this man still remains his share of the inheritance. This man is in the same position as the woman who was brooding over her lost goat while the words of life were falling on deaf ears. Like the woman, this man also could probably not remember one word of what the preacher said.

Jesus, fearing there could be more people in the crowd like this man, turns and says to them, "**Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions**" (Luke 12:15). Greed? What greed?

The man was only asking for justice to be done between him and his brother. Shouldn't a man of God be concerned for fairness? O, yes. Jesus warns us that greed comes in many guises, even in the guise of concern for justice. Have you ever heard a respectable man opposing plans to improve conditions for welfare recipients: "I've worked and paid taxes all my life. How can the government spend my money on welfare recipients who do nothing but sit down and do drugs all day?" Sounds like an argument for justice and fairness. But it could indeed be greed in disguise. That is why Jesus warns us and emphasizes it: "**Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed.**" Greed can be upfront or subtle, conscious or unconscious. We must be on our guard against greed in all its forms.

To illustrate his point Jesus tells the Parable of the Rich Fool. When you read the parable you ask yourself, "What wrong did this man do?" Think about it. The man did his honest work on his farmland. The land gave a bumper harvest. The man decided to build a larger storage for the crop so that he could live the rest of his life on Easy Street. Only he did not know that the rest of his life was less than twenty-four hours. Jesus uses him as an illustration of greed even though he took no one's thing. He did not do something wrong. His greed lies in what he did not do.

Sir Fred Catherwood is quoted as saying that greed is "the belief that there is no life after death. We grab what we can while we can however we can and then hold on to it hard." now you see why the rich man qualifies as an example of greed. Now you see why Jesus was so hard on greed. Greed is the worship of another God. The name of that god is Mammon or Money or Materialism. Today's gospel invites us to believe in the God of Jesus Christ who alone can give eternal life and not in the god of this world who gives us the false promise of immortality through accumulation of possessions.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Ecclesiastes 2:21-23

Colossians 3:1-11

Luke 12:13-21

August 4, 2013

靈 修 生 活

亞 偉 的 爭 取 與 捨 棄

李 耀 邦 神 父

每天翻開報章，除了政治、經濟、新聞外，我們還會看到一些令人感慨的報導；幾乎每天都有人為種種原因輕生，當中有男女感情，也有抵受不了失業之苦或學習的壓力。也許，這些人心中都有太大的執著，以至沒有空間去追尋生命中更有價值的事物。

記得多年前，我參加了普世青年節。出發前，世青節籌委會為我們舉辦了一些祈禱聚會。在其中一次聚會中，我認識了亞偉。那次聚會中，亞偉分享為何要參與世青時說：「我幾年前已想參加世青，但因為任職的公司不批准請假，以至希望落空。我今年已三十三歲了，再不參加，便會超齡。我已決定放棄工作，誓要參加今次的普世青年節。」聽罷，大家都便佩服亞偉，因為當時香港的就業市場已逐步緊縮。辭職後，再找工作已不容易呢；起程時，亞偉果真辭去工作，和我們踏上旅程，且成為當中一位積極的參與者。

返港後，籌委會為我們舉辦了一些延續信仰的活動。但在聚會中，亞偉卻很少出現。我一直猜想亞偉已覓得工作，並因工作繁忙而未能出席。但約兩星期前一晚，我從其他組員中獲悉亞偉因癌病離開了這世界；亞偉的離去帶給我深刻的反思：亞偉一直希望在靈修生活中有一份突破，他毅然辭去工作，放下俗世許多憂慮，踏上他渴望已久的世青之旅；天主垂顧了他，讓他在魂歸天國之前，得以完成心願。亞偉雖然英年早逝，但他的爭持、他的捨棄，卻深深影響著我呢！

今天，耶穌籍福音的比喻教我們戒貪世物。比喻中的富翁為收藏自己不斷增加的穀物和財產而牽掛，滿腦子只想到日後如何吃喝玩樂。然而天主卻要在當天晚上索回他的靈魂！反觀我們自己，不也是終日為錢財、為外在的一切，為世俗的事務而牽掛、煩惱，以至失去空間生活，沒法親近上主，也無法真誠地愛己愛人？也許，我們要學習的是亞偉對信仰的爭持和對世俗的捨棄。

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 三 年 八 月 四 日

訓 2:21-23 ; 哥 3:1-11 ; 路 12:13-21