

**Seventh Sunday after Trinity**  
**July 31, 2022**  
**Homily for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass**  
**of St. Thomas More Catholic Parish**  
**celebrated at**  
**St. Joseph Catholic Church**  
**116 Theodore Street**  
**Scranton, PA 18508**  
**Luke 12:13-21**

Since our inception as a community in formation more than seventeen years ago, St. Thomas More has not relied on savings or on endowment to meet the needs of our mission. What this means practically is that we live basically Sunday collection to Sunday collection, paying the bills as they come in and checking the account balance to make sure we don't bounce anything. For example, since Mr. Campbell is on vacation, I'll pay a number of bills tomorrow just up the street in person, using the funds we collect at Mass today.

I recognize that for many this sounds like a frightening way to live, seemingly ever on the edge of insolvency, with nothing in savings to address the unexpected that could arise at any moment. But I promise you our method is not a sign of irresponsibility, but rather of living according to today's Gospel, wherein the rich fool must account for all the wealth he has amassed instead of shared. I have several reasons for not wanting to be the rich fool in this parable, and the most obvious is that I don't want to go to hell.

For decades I have shuddered for those pastors who have accumulated massive endowments to meet the future needs of their parishes while spending rather little to evangelize or meet the needs of the poor. Before I was Catholic, I served at two parishes wherein we lived off the money that had been given by parishioners who had died decades before. We operated on interest, or even the principal, of those investments, instead of relying on contributions from people living today. This comports precisely with the attitude of the rich fool who desires to take his ease, eat drink, and be merry, living off the wealth he has amassed rather than living off his hard work and sharing what he's gained.

At the end of our lives, when each of us must make account to Jesus for the wealth we have accumulated, each of us will be judged individually for our personal possessions. But I will be judged for the wealth of my parish. As your pastor, who has ultimate responsibility for every dollar that is spent or saved, I don't want to stand before Jesus on the day I die with a heap of gold piled behind me, lest I be condemned for being a poor steward of the money you sacrificed to give to God. You gave it to give it away. I don't want to go to hell for saving it.

I do, however, have an even stronger motivation for running the parish as I do. Having no savings means relying completely, every day, upon God's providence for all our needs. Having no savings for more than seventeen years straight implies we have trusted God will give us what we need; and our experience has demonstrated that our trust is not misplaced. You're familiar with how quickly we raised the money to buy this church ten years ago, but we have many other examples.

A couple of years ago I was approached by a neighbor who desired to sell his house to us because he and his family were so pleased with what we have done to improve the neighborhood. The purchase of the Bloch House at 119 Ferdinand Street, which Msgr. Perkins will bless in less than three weeks, was contingent upon our having the cash to do so. So I wrote a letter to you and immediately received not only the purchase price but ten thousand more to help with the restoration. God's will was indicated in the immediate gifts we received.

This principle works the other way, too. Shortly after we bought the church, we discovered our classroom space for Christian education was inadequate. I appealed for money to restore the rooms in the basement of the Rectory for such necessary work. But I received not one dime for the proposal, indicating God wanted something different. When I appealed for money to fix the Convent for the same educational purpose, we received what we needed, the work was done, and our Parish School, Maria Kaupas Academy, is the fruit of God's generosity. God provided the means for what He wanted done and provided nothing for what He didn't. If we'd had money lying around, I might well have done the work on the Rectory basement, only to learn years later that as a place of public accommodation, we have to invest thousands and thousands more to meet building codes. We were blessed to have nothing and to receive what we needed when we needed it.

Just to be clear, I am not saying that savings of any kind are immoral, or that everyone should live with next to nothing in his bank account. What I am saying is that very often parishes and individual savers have more squirreled away than they need; and that money could be better spent meeting the immediate needs of the Church whose business is not banking but the salvation of souls. If your parish will spend the money in accord with God's will, give whatever extra you have to Jesus, and trust that God will continue to be generous to you. He has been so generous up to this point. How can we imagine that in our faithfulness that generosity would somehow cease? Truly God has provided; He does provide; and He will provide.

I run this parish the way I do because I trust God will give us what we need, and I intend to meet my Maker face to face with a clear conscience. I commend this to you, as well. Run your households the same way, discerning carefully how much you need to save, but never merely to take your ease, eat, drink and be merry. Your money was given to you, certainly, in order that you may live. But it was also given for the same reason God gives money to the Church. You have money also that others may live, and this is what we shall answer for on the Last Day. I have a completely clear conscience that we have been good stewards of the money we have received. I pray that you may say the same and that the Lord will not address you as a fool when He calls you to your eternal abode.