

November 6, 2020 – 31st Week in Ordinary Time



**“Being ready to be Christians with an ‘excellent spine!’”
(Phil 3:17-4:1 and Lk 16:1-8)**

Lk 16: 1-8 – The story – We should be like that: Believers should emulate “the disposition, foresight, savvy of unbelievers without adopting their morality

It was a Bible study class. The group was doing a study on the Book of Prophet Daniel. As was the custom, one of the members would start the Bible study by reading the passage of the day, to the group, aloud. The selected passage for the day was Chapter 6 of the Book of Daniel. An elderly person, stood up to read. He, however had some struggle with his sight and was finding it a bit difficult to read. When he came to verse 3... (which actually says: “... an excellent spirit was in Daniel”) adjusting his thick glasses, the man read: “... an excellent spine was in Daniel!” (The word ‘spirit’ was mistakenly read as ‘spine’!). Well, that was bad reading but nevertheless, it was wonderful theology, because Prophet Daniel was indeed a man of excellent spine – a backbone that made him strong and courageous. Are we Christians with an “excellent spine?”

The Gospel of the Day, with a worldly example placed before us – the Parable of the Unjust Steward – is a mighty challenge to us to examine whether we as Christians, are people who really are bold and courageous to stand for the Gospel principles and really are zealous and prudent to preserve our holiness and sanctity.

The story of the Unjust Parable is an interesting as well as an eye-opener for us, in our spiritual and Christian life. This is also a parable that could be classified under the “controversial” or “what-was-He-really-meaning” category. The summary of the parable goes thus. A steward has been reported to the Master for squandering the property (Lk 16:1). Dismissal is on the cards for the steward (Lk 16:2). Taking stock of the possibilities for the future, he decides and acts on the principle: Manipulation is the best policy for a safer future (Lk 16:3-7). The Master commends this unjust, yet prudent and craft act of the steward! (Lk 16: 8a).

The parable could cause some strange questions to crop up: why is Jesus – the Honest-Man-par-excellence – presenting this strangely negative example to His followers? Does Jesus mean that we should follow the bad ways of the world, in order

to win our salvation? “Hook or Crook” – is that the policy that Jesus says for us Christians, to live in this world? Well, Without going deep into the theological debates of such questions we shall look into the answer that Jesus Himself proposed for saying this parable: “For the children of the world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation, than are the children of light” (Lk 16: 8b)

The purpose of Jesus to say this parable is put forth: Children of this world are often more shrewd to make sure a good future whereas, the children of the light, tend to be extremely relaxed concerning their salvation. People of this worldly kingdom are willing to go to any extent to secure themselves whereas those who supposedly wish to belong to God’s Kingdom, leisure themselves in lethargy. This is a technique of “comparative imperative” that is proposed by Jesus by emphasizing on the opposite, a challenge is put forth and by highlighting a negative dimension, the positive aspect is enforced.

Such “comparative imperatives” can easily be observed in our lives. We would make every effort to be in time to catch a bus/train/flight, so as not to miss it but don’t mind, being late for our prayers or spiritual activities, including the Holy Mass. We would ensure every day we have our food and get a good rest, so that our bodies don’t get weak but give no regard to feed and give rest to our souls, by spending time with the Lord in personal prayer and growing in relationship with Him. We would feel a dreadful sense of disgust if we do not have our daily bath (shower) and cleanse our bodies but have sometimes no awareness to realize our souls are dirty and we need to cleanse them through a daily examination of conscience, and regularly through the Sacramental Confession. We don’t mind wagging our tongues to say a bad word or a dirty joke or nasty words of criticism and condemnation but think often, when we need to say something positive or appreciate someone or to say an occasional prayer to recall the presence of the Lord.

This “comparative imperative” proposed by the Lord in this parable makes us to reflect deeper: Am I more enthusiastic about the affairs of this world, which gives only transient joy at the cost of avoiding my spiritual life, which alone can ensure me eternal happiness? Am I only concerned more about my materialistic concerns and my temporal duties and end up neglecting the solemn duties of our Christian life and being more spiritually rooted?

Our Blessed Lord is extremely serious that we take our Christian lives and faith, on a more serious note. Salvation is at stake... Eternal Life is at question. The Lord is perhaps addressing us, and telling: “For those who are working you would try to make any sincere efforts to make sure you get a better salary, isn’t it? For those who are studying you would try to put in extra hard work to ensure you get the extra marks, isn’t it? For those who are at home you would spare no efforts, to ensure peace and harmony and a happy time, isn’t it? For those in institutes or companies or in-charge of some establishment you would take the extra mile to be the best and co-ordinate to the maximum, to give better performances, isn’t it?

Then why, Why sometimes, lethargy only for spiritual life? Why sometimes, indifference, only with respect to a life of faith?" Let the words of St Paul be a reminder to us: "But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ..." (Phil 3:20).

Let us pray:

On this First Friday of the month, Lord Jesus, increase our Faith to renew our consecration and commitment to Your Most Sacred Heart and lying in Your Love, and seek to live our Christian Faith with greater enthusiasm and delight and ready to live our Christians life with an "excellent spine"

Jesus, I Trust In You