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Eccl 1:2,2:21-23

Col 3:1-5,9-11

Lk 12:13-21

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 3, 2025

“Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth, all things are vanity!” In this Sacred Scripture passage, found in the opening of Ecclesiastes, the English word vanity is translated from the Hebrew word hebel, which means vapor or breath, something fleeting or insubstantial, its meaningless or empty. Qoheleth is telling his audience, there are things of this world that can be wonderful, but they are passing.

Vanity is often referred to as vainglory, which Our Catholic Catechism describes as this extreme desire someone **must manifest one's own excellence**. It differs from pride, which is the uncontrolled desire for self-esteem. Vanity primarily seeks to show others what a person has or has achieved, often focusing on external appearances rather than inner virtues.

Vanity is considered one of the three root sins in Christian tradition, alongside pride and sensuality. It stems from insecurity and a need for affirmation from others. A vain person often worries excessively about how they are perceived, seeking praise and recognition for superficial qualities. We have classic examples of this with popular Apps like FaceBook, Instagram and so many others, to glorify worldly pleasures and false pretense of who we are. Jesus's parable in our Gospel reading is also a fitting example of this. Most theologians today believe, Ecclesiastes was written around the third or fourth century, and then in circulation in the second century BC. Qoheleth,

which means teacher or preacher, tells his audience, Life is futile with a few sprinkles of joy. There is no enduring satisfaction, Riches are a failure. Even to him, wisdom is a failure. The **human situation is utterly bleak**. The key here being **the human situation**. Qoheleth is a critic of the thought of an afterlife, there isn't one, life is difficult and fleeting, death is inevitable and so try enjoying this life while you can. Qoheleth, only sees the existence of an earthly horizon and not one with eternal meaning. His focus is all on the earth, **the human situation** and not thinking of what is above or beyond the horizon.

We see this on steroids in our Gospel reading, Jesus is emphasizing what Qoheleth and Paul were declaring in the first two readings, **that things of this world are passing**, we must take control our lives to create a joyful experience before it's too late, that heaven is only a dream or a thought, and not possible to possess right now, in this life.

This parable is not about money or possessions, it's about attitude, he's addressing all people, those with many possessions and those who don't. In this parable, the rich man cannot see beyond himself. It's all about him. This parable has the most “I's,” Me's, mine and My's than any other parable. The rich man finds his happiness on earthly things, and he's not going to share them with anyone. He doesn't find happiness in doing so. He has this bountiful harvest and gives himself all the credit, zero to God. He even goes as far as to destroy his status, tearing down his barns, for a future that he has no control over, but he thinks he does. He becomes a greedy hoarder, always desiring to have more. Always chasing the next “shiny object” that he

thinks will bring him joy and never looking for what is beyond this world. One of our antiphons in the Liturgy of the Hours this week, sums up this entire parable up in one stanza, “Of what use is it to a man to gain the whole world, if he pays for it by losing his soul?” Oh, how can I relate to all of this when I was younger in spirit. St. Basil the Great wrote in the 4th Century, “when you die, you are going to leave your money and possessions behind, whether you wish it or not. On the other hand, you will take with you to the Lord the honor that you have **won through good works...your reward for the right use of things of this world will be everlasting glory, a crown of righteousness, and the kingdom of heaven; God will welcome you, the angels will praise you, all men and women who existed since the world began will call you blessed.** “

A book I recommend to everyone is by Father Albert Hasse, “Catching Fire, Becoming Flame, A Guide for Spiritual Transformation.” He has one chapter titled “The Attitude of Gratitude” where he states “Prayer is not the only time-tested kindling for the fire of godly enthusiasm. There is also the Attitude of Gratitude, which builds upon both a healthy image of God and a vibrant, intentional prayer life. **In daily life we must see that it is**

not happiness that makes us grateful, but gratefulness that makes us happy.” Gratitude transforms us into children who recognize their dependence and who realize that everything is a grace, a gift, and blessing from a good God. Parents, if you have not started instilling this in your children, you need to do it now. It will make your life so much easier as they grow older. He also quotes G.K. Chesterson who said **“God’s grace is the unquestionable foundation of life, and gratitude is the first response.**

I think another great first response is stop living our lives like Qoheleth. In his defense, he didn’t have the opportunity to live with Jesus Christ like we have, to be baptized into his Church, to eat of his body and drink of his blood. To read his Sacred Scriptures, to participate in the Passion, Resurrection of God’s only son and enjoy him in his Sacraments. If our faith is shaken, we look beyond the earthly horizon. We look beyond what Qoheleth can see. If we are suffering, we **have to not focus on what the human body see’s and feels but what God sees and feels for our help**, and when we receive a tremendous gift that brings us joy, we don’t give thanks by building bigger barns.

The End