



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C

Fr. David Rosenberg
Institute for Spiritual Direction
visit us at <http://www.ISDministries.org/>

"Be on your guard against all kinds of greed." Luke 12:14

In today's gospel Jesus speaks of the difficulties that possessions can create. Interestingly, because Jesus is regarded as a Rabbi it would not have been unusual for him to be asked to settle a family inheritance issue. But Jesus, the Giver of Peace, sees that just such an intervention would only further divides the family, and so he declines the offer to arbitrate the dispute. This has its own interesting nuance to consider: Jesus as rabbi, not as carpenter's son. This observation alone merits reflection.

One could wonder how Jesus' fame caught on so quickly over a broad geography at the onset of his public ministry. One explanation might be that Jesus entered public ministry with a reputation as Rabbi. Rabbis have respect, honor and standing in the Jewish Community. In Luke, Jesus is afforded this dignity of a Rabbi. He had the years from his bar mitzvah until he entered public ministry at the age of 30 to establish just such a religious standing.

In this story, Jesus, rather than dismiss the man totally, goes on to offer the parable of the rich fool. Jesus implies that possessions lead to an ample pathway to greed. And, no matter how much we accumulate, our earthly wealth someday disintegrates.

Possessions in and of themselves are not inherently evil. But all too often the desires for possessions turn into obsession, which leads to greed. That is the evil Jesus insists we must avoid. Greed is always self defeating. *You cannot project onto a mortal object a power the object does not have.* That is idolatry. Lust, then, is just that: projecting onto mortal objects that which they are not. It will never satiate the hunger and desire of the heart.

But true life is fertile and abundant, and always creates more and more. The reflection then is how best to participate in this abundance after a lifetime of perceived scarcity that leads to a habit of possession. Only fools believe their possessions are god – fools that live life obsessed by their possessions. This inevitably leads to death.

Jesus calls us to reflect on the source of all that we have. The soul receives its life in abundance from God. We, in turn, through divinization, can become an out-flowing source of abundant life. As we take on divine mercy through the Body of Christ, we live not possessed by our possessions, but by spiritual outflow.

We have a choice: we can decay over time within our possessions or we can choose life in abundance. *"I come that they might have life and that they might have it in abundance."*

John 10:10

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus,
*"Teacher, tell my brother
to divide the family inheritance with me."*

But Jesus said to him,
"Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?"

And Jesus said to the crowd,
*"Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed;
for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."*

Then Jesus told them a parable:
*"The land of a rich man produced abundantly.
And he thought to himself,
'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?'
Then he said, 'I will do this:
I will pull down my barns and build larger ones,
and there I will store all my grain and my goods.
And I will say to my soul,
'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years;
relax, eat, drink, be merry.'"
"But God said to him,
'You fool!
This very night your life is being demanded of you.
And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'
So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves
but are not rich toward God."*

The Gospel of the Lord