

# Archbishop Lori's Homily: 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time; Basilica of St. Mary, Minneapolis

*18th Sunday in Ordinary Time*

*Knights of Columbus Supreme Officers and Board; State Officers*

*Basilica of Saint Mary*

*Minneapolis, MN*

*August 3, 2019*

## **A Word of Thanks**

Archbishop Hebda, thank you for the honor of preaching at this Holy Mass here in the very beautiful Basilica of Saint Mary, indeed America's first Basilica. It is also a pleasure to be gathered in prayer with Supreme Knight, Carl Anderson, with the Officers and Directors of the Knights of Columbus, and with the State Officers and Delegates from Minnesota and beyond. We look forward to the Supreme Convention that will take place this coming week and we thank you, Archbishop Hebda, for serving as our gracious host ordinary.

Before we reflect on today's Scripture readings, let us pause for a moment and remember in prayer those who died and were injured today in El Paso and let us also ask the Lord for an end to such violence in our midst.

## **Security Here and Hereafter**

And so, dear friends: In an uncertain world, we seek a measure of security. We strive to keep our homes and neighborhoods safe and secure. We work hard to provide for our families. We plan for the future by saving and investing part of our income. Fr. McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus, in part, to provide a level of security for Catholic families left vulnerable by the death of their breadwinners. Today the Knights of Columbus offers an array of excellent life-insurance products, high quality annuities, and other top-rate financial planning and consulting services. And just to

be clear, the foregoing was not an advertisement!

As we work hard and plan ahead, striving for security and happiness, along come today's Scripture readings, readings that call us to take a critical look at the kind of security we are trying to attain for ourselves and our families. Are we seeking comfort and security in this life only? Are we planning with equal diligence for our happiness and security in eternity? And how does the Knights of Columbus help us to invest not only in our earthly security but indeed in our heavenly security? Let us allow today's Scripture readings to shed light on these questions.

### **Grasping for Security and Happiness**

The Gospel gets us to the heart of the matter. Someone in the crowd asked Jesus to intervene in a family dispute over a will: "Tell my brother to share the inheritance with me!" The Savior, who came into the world to offer us an eternal inheritance, wisely declined to serve as a probate judge for that earthly last will and testament. Instead Jesus followed his Father's will, by warning us against greed in all its forms. Not only that, he also illustrated the point by telling us the parable of the rich man who tried to secure his future by storing up in newly built barns his surplus of grain and his valuable possessions. Relying only on himself and reveling in his amassed wealth, that man was looking forward to a life of security, leisure, and enjoyment.

Qoheleth, in today's first reading, would describe that rich man's life as futile. All the possessions he stored up could not spare him from worry and anxiety nor could they give him the good life that he craved. In today's Gospel parable, Jesus was much more direct than Qoheleth. Jesus tells us that just when the rich man settles in to enjoy his surplus wealth, God says to him, "You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you!" His possessions did not save him from death and were quickly dispersed to others. The wealthy man put all his eggs in one basket: the basket of earthly security. In a phrase, he failed to "store up treasure in heaven."

And we may say to ourselves, "Well, I'm not like the wealthy man in the parable. I'm just trying to put bread on the table and save up for college tuition for my kids. And by the way, I need to put away a little money for retirement." Even so, Jesus' parable is meant for us, no matter what our economic status might be. Whether we have a lot or a little we are nonetheless subject to temptations of greed and we are prone to

the illusion that our possessions will bring us security. Jesus challenges us to examine our consciences in this regard on several levels:

He first urges us to step back and assess whether our possessions are excessive. What do we cling to that we could very well do without and give away to others? We are also challenged to examine not only what we have stored away in our closets but also what we have stored away in our minds and hearts. Are we envious of those who are doing better than we are? ...those who have a nicer home or a better car or a more exciting career? Are we so preoccupied with our possessions and investments, that we neglect to invest in our relationship with God and our loved ones? So we are called to examine not only what we have but also our attitude with regard to our possessions and investments, be they great or small. To repeat, Jesus advises us to “store up treasure in heaven.” Or, as he says elsewhere, “Where your heart is, there will your treasure be.”

### **Seek What Is Above**

Stepping back and examining our attitude toward money and possessions is important but if we heed St. Paul's message in today's reading from Colossians, we'll do more. True to Jesus' parable, we'll re-orient our thinking, decision-making, and priorities. “If you were raised with Christ,” St. Paul says to us, “seek what is above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth”, he says to us, and here's the message: If we share in Christ's life and seek to follow him, we will reject all forms of self-centered immorality but especially ‘that greed which is idolatry’ – that grasping attachment to this world's goods which always turns out to be a poor substitute for God. In rejecting all such vices, all such self-centered and evil behavior, we'll also find ourselves re-evaluating even the good things God has given us. Instead of hoarding our blessings, we'll share them with others, as we keep our eyes fixed on the goal of our lives, life on high where Christ is seated at God's right hand.

To be clear, the Gospel does not tell us to leave our families unprovided for, but it does call us to express our trust in God's providence by consistently engaging in charity towards others especially those who are most need and most vulnerable. And this brings back to the question of how the Knights of Columbus helps us invest in

both our earthly and our heavenly security. Even as the Knights offers its members excellent insurance and investment products, so too the Order helps us to put our faith in action, to live our values, by living the first principle of the Order, namely, charity. The charitable outreach of the Order, world-wide and at the local level, is amazing, both in the funds that are contributed and also in the hours of volunteer service, charitable services that include assistance to Christian refugees, help for individuals and families striving to recover from natural disasters, support for Special Olympics, Coats for Inner-City Kids, partnerships with Habitat for Humanity, the Ultrasound Initiative, to name a few.

A life of charity and service towards others is in an indispensable way to reorient our lives toward Christ our Redeemer, and, to invest not merely in earthly security but above all in our heavenly security. For, as the 4th century bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Basil the Great, said: "You are going to leave your money behind you here, whether you wish to or not. On the other hand, you will take with you to the Lord the honor you have won through your good works. In the presence of the Universal Judge, all people will surround you, acclaim you as a public benefactor, and tell of your generosity and kindness." And that, my dear friends, is the dividend of investing in our heavenly security! May God bless us and keep us in his love! Vivat Jesus!