

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year C

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:21-23

Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

Luke 12:13-21

GATHERING

(An unlit candle and a bible open to this week's gospel, with a twenty dollar bill placed in it as if it was a book mark, rest on a table in the gathering place.)

OPENING PRAYER

(The candle is lit. The leader invites members to silent acknowledgement of the presence of God with them. After some time of quiet, the leader takes up the bible with the twenty dollar bill and silently passes it to the nearest member. The bible continues to be passed to each of the members. After the bible has been returned to the table, the leader invites members to share what passed through their minds as they looked at the bible with the twenty dollar bill resting in it. When this sharing is complete, two members and the leader pray as follows on behalf of all.)

PRAYER BEFORE A TWENTY DOLLAR BILL

I: Lord, see this bill! It frightens me.
You know its secrets, you know its history.
How heavy it is!
It scares me, for it cannot speak.
It will never tell all it hides in its creases.
It will never reveal all the struggles and efforts it
represents, all the disillusionment and slighted dignity.
It is stained with sweat and blood.
It is laden with all the weight of the human toil which
makes its worth.

II: It has offered white roses to the radiant fiancée.
 It has paid for the baptismal party, and fed the rosy
 cheeked baby.
 It has provided bread for the family table.
 Because of it there was laughing among the young
 and joy among the elders.
 It has paid for the saving visit of the doctor,
 It has bought the book that taught the youngster,
 It has clothed the little girl.

I: But it has sent the letter breaking the engagement,
 It has bought the liquor that made the drunkard,
 And has recorded the indecent song,
 It has paid for the weapons of the crime and for the
 wood of the coffin.

Leader: O Lord, we offer you this bill with its joyous mysteries,
 its sorrowful mysteries.
 We thank you for all the life and joy it has given.
 We ask your forgiveness for the harm it has done.
 But above all, Lord, we offer it to you as a symbol
 of all our human labors, indestructible money, which
 tomorrow will be changed into your eternal life.

All: Amen.

Adapted from *Prayers*, Michel Quoist,
 Sheed and Ward, New York, 1963.

(A selection of instrumental music is played.)

COMMENTARY

There's been a television ad recently, sponsored by a major insurance company, that features a dog running about doing his best to protect what is most valuable to him. He tries burying his prized bone in the backyard, but he tosses and turns all night long. The next day, Rover takes his bone to the bank and secures it, but he still isn't anxiety free. Finally he places it in a bowl right in front of him. With that, the insurance logo floats confidently over his treasure and the

pooch naps dreamlessly. While all this action happens, the Buddy Guy song, "Worry, Worry, Worry," plays in the background: "Well, worry, worry, worry, baby, worry's all I can do, well worry, worry, worry..."

This week the scriptures ask us to consider what our treasures are and what we "worry, worry, worry" over. The Wisdom writer of Ecclesiastes tells us quite plainly that all the worry and anxiety about the fruits of our toiling under the hot sun is finally in vain. The psalmist reminds us that the things of this earth "at dawn spring anew, but by evening wither and fade". And Jesus tells us the story of the futility of the rich man's worry, worry, worry about where to store his excess wealth!

What worry, worry, worries you? Does what you worry over cause you so much anxiety that "sorrow and grief" become your occupation? Jesus calls us to refocus what worries us. He tells us not to be foolish about gathering all the stuff we think will guarantee the good life.

Do you bury the bones of material possessions in the backyard of your soul and lose sleep over them? How preoccupied have you become with financial independence and comfort? Jesus calls us to not store up treasures for ourselves, but to become rich in "what matters to God." How secure are you – *in God*?

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ What do you *worry, worry, worry* about?
- ◆ What do you treasure?
- ◆ How preoccupied have you become with financial independence and comfort?
- ◆ How deeply do you value "what matters to God"?
- ◆ In our culture our value is often seen in *having it all*. What's *enough* for you?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

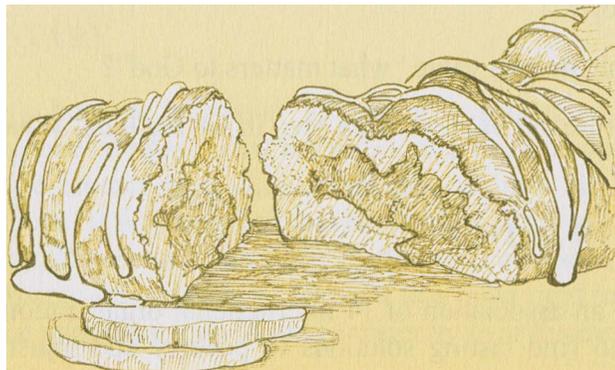
- ◆ Oxfam is an association of 14 international organizations working together to find lasting solutions to poverty and injustice. Go to

www.oxfam.org and click on **Get Involved** to see how you can act in support.

- ◆ Prioritize what you treasure in the threefold biblical discipline: fasting, prayer and almsgiving. *Fast*, i.e., moderate your physical needs and desires. *Pray*, i.e., engage in honest communication with God about what you value. *Give alms*, i.e., share more than what you might first be inclined to give to those who are in need.
- ◆ Reduce stress of all kinds; incorporate an exercise regime into your daily routine. Take a 15 minute walk each day this week.
- ◆ The Faith and Money Network seeks to equip people to transform their relationship with money to live with integrity and intentionality and to participate in creating a more equitable world. Check it out at www.faithandmoneynetwork.org.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader invites the community to a time of quiet. After a minute of silence, the gospel for the week is re-read by a member of the community. Following the reading, the leader poses this question to the community: "What does Christ say to you/us in your hearing this gospel today?" The community pauses for a full five to seven minutes of prayerful attention to how Christ speaks to them in this gospel. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two or a brief thought that captures what they hear Christ saying to them. When this sharing is complete, some instrumental music is played. When the music is complete, the prayer continues as follows.)



All: O generous and bountiful God, you call us to share the gifts that you have given us with our brothers and sisters, especially the most needy.
Give us open hands and hearts.
May we never give in to greed of any form.
We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

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(Members exchange a sign of peace.)

