

"Even at night his mind is not at rest. Vanity of vanities..."

Jesus today speaks about "those who store up treasure for themselves, but are not rich in what matters to God..."

And the First Reading is about the anxieties of the greedy....those who have too much worry about having more, and worry about losing what they have:

"Vanity of vanities!"

But what of those in the shrinking middle class in our day? Are their worries a vanity?

Hardly. Some have to work two jobs just to keep afloat. They have reason to worry.

These are days of high anxiety for many, as we continue a recovery from the greatest recession since the 1930's.

And this particular period of time has echoes of the turbulent 1930's. And there are leaders among us who also echo some of the loudest and bombastic of the leaders of the 1930's!

Consider:

In Italy in the midst of a confused and anxious population, a leader arose who rode a white horse. He was poorly educated and ignorant in many ways but he had charisma

He strutted and pontificated from his balcony.

The populace saluted him as:

"Il Duce!.....the Leader!

He bellowed:

"I will make Italy great again!"

"I will restore the glories of the Roman Empire!"

So he attacked little Ethiopia.

And the people followed him like sheep into the slaughter of World War II.

UNTIL:

They discovered his promises were empty slogans.

And then:

They hung him upside down by his heels at a Milan gas station.

His echoes resonate in our time.

And then there was another poorly educated, ignorant in many ways, yet deviously charismatic leader who arose in a dispirited Germany.

Divide and conquer was his method.

Find a scapegoat and blame them for ALL our problems.

The Jews would do. They looked a little different. They lacked pure Aryan blood. Some of them were even "latecomers to Germany--even immigrants.

Blame them!

So here you have two megalomaniacs,

Benito and Adolph.

And the people voted for them.

Surely here, there is a lesson for our times.

And so we pray:

Come Holy Spirit,

Consoler and unifier,

bring our people together,

rather than being torn apart:

by bigotry, racism, or bombast.

Renew us with love and community,

so that we might

renew the face of the Earth.

Amen