

Reflections **for: Aug. 4, 11, 18,**

"The world is a book and those who do not travel, read only one page." St. Augustine

On August 7, I turn 81, and I am grateful that I am still turning. On August 8 I leave for Seattle, then to Vancouver to sail on the Oceania Regatta on an Alaskan cruise with Rosemary, my Godson George and his wife, Dennis andMarthaler.

Returning Aug. 24, 2013

I will be putting in short reflections for Aug. 11, 18, and 25, and you **can can find them in THIS Aug. 4 space as you scroll down.**

Today: Have you noticed in every town you go through the number of storage facilities? When I was growing up they did not exist because no one had any extra stuff to store!

Jesus talks about the whole "storage scene" in today's Gospel.

He tells about a rich man who has a problem. He has so much "stuff" he does not have enough space to store it.

He is in a quandry, all worried about what to do. So he figures he must tear down his present storage space and build up larger and larger storage bins. So he figures once he gets this accomplished, he can sit back, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said: "You fool!" This night your life shall be demanded of you!"

And the opening lines of the First Reading could well be directed toward the man in the Gospel:

"Vanity of Vanities, says Quothaleth, vanity of vanities! All things are vanity."

I planned to leave some money in my will for my Godson to take a cruise. But then I got thinking: there is no guarantee that when I die, there will be one cent left, since costs for extended care can quickly evaporate any savings. So I am taking him now while I can. Certainly one of the points of today's scriptures is to act NOW, and not count on tomorrow. NOT to eat, drink, and just be merry, but to share eats and drinks and merriment with others while we have them to share. Now is the time to be generous. Now is the time to use the goods of this world wisely and generously for they are all quickly passing, one way or another. As the old saying goes, "There are no pockets in shrouds."

But the scriptures today do not ask us to live in fear of the end times, whether they are tomorrow or a thousand years from now, but rather to judge wisely about our time and our resources. In an interesting article in the New York Times by Cizik, the author writes:

"Preaching about the "end times" is an obvious way to get an audience. If you hang a sign out for the sermon titled: "Our Obligation to the Poor" you will not get anybody. But if you preach about "the end times" you will. But the message of Jesus is more often about the NOW times.

In today's Second Reading, Paul reminds us that NOW we are NEW people baptized into Christ which allows us to let go of the OLD: immorality, impurity, evil desires and the greed that is immorality. In his great novel, *Bonfire of the Vanities*, Thomas Wolfe wrote about this "greed that is immorality." It became like a consuming fire in the life of the young broker.

When we visited Limerick in Ireland last year, we visited a brand new university, endowed by one single man who had struck it rich during the ascent of the Celtic Tiger. He declared "Every good city should have a seat of learning." And then he went about providing one for Limerick which up til then had none. And the donor even tried to keep his identity secret.

Here indeed was a man, "rich in what matters to God."

Breakfast Question: Why is greed singled out as: "greed that is immorality?"

Personal Reflection: "One's life does not consist of possessions." said Jesus. Is this true in our culture?

August 11, Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

For where your treasure is, there your heart shall be." LK Ch. 12, Today's Gospel

Last week, Luke directed us towards living wisely and not being taken in by vanities, This week the Gospel continues along the same direction.

So where is our treasure? There was a real life story last year about a Renaissance man who lived here in Phoenix. He had done everything: climbed the highest mountains, sailed the high seas, a man whose touch turned to gold, until things turned sour for him. He reached the heights and then began to fall into the depths. His fortune diminished like water running down the drain. He always had been a winner and now he became a loser. One night he poured gasoline around the walls of his mansion in the exclusive Biltmore enclave. He set it afire: a "bonfire of the vanities." Then he donned scuba diving equipment and climbed down a rope to safety. The fire marshall did not buy his story of innocence. Not to long after that, he was charged with arson. The day of his trial, he sat calmly awaiting the verdict. It came down s "Guilty." He put his hand to his mouth and swallowed a cyanide pill, and died on the flook before the shocked judge.

When this man's treasure was gone. He felt he had nothing to live for.

"For where your treasure is, there your heart shall be." LK 12

Breakfast Question: What really counts in my life?

Personal Reflection: Have I lately told those who "count in my life" how much they are my treasure?

August 18, Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Jesus said, 'I have come to set the earth on fire...LK 12:49

The Bonfire of the Vanities? Perhaps. Luke wants us to see that the challenge of Jesus is radical. For the last two Sundays we have seen how Gospel values clash with the usual greedy values of every culture. Some write that narcissism is rampant in our society. Perhaps this is evident in our political life. YES I want money so the government can buy more bombs. NO I do not want the government helping the needy. NO I do not want illegal immigrants! MY family kept the law. These illegals should be given no amnesty. (Well, yes of course, if MY child gets in trouble, I do want amnesty.)

So much of our value system is about ME.

As congress cuts food stamps for hungry children....Well that is OK.

But don't you dare touch MY Social Security!

If we look back at history, we often find that sons and daughters who accepted the radical call of the Gospel were considered crazy by their parents.

"a father will be divided against his son..." Yes, St. Francis of Assisi's father thought his son to

be crazy for his embrace of Gospel poverty. The same was true of the parents of St. Thomas Aquinas who had him locked up!

Breakfast Question: Is there anything that I do that is counter cultural to current values?

Personal Reflection: Does anyone look at the way I live the Gospel and consider me crazy? Would it be good if they did?