

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

When I was eighteen years old I met a girl around my same age and we fell in love. It was super exciting and blissful. We used to talk on the phone for hours. We used to have a rechargeable cordless phone and our ritual was to talk each night until it died, usually around two hours. I felt it was a risk to my life that I did this each night. It was a risk to my life because I had to be up by six each morning to drive to school, which was close to an hour away. There was no Catholic high school in my town and so each day I drove to Kelowna to attend school. Many nights I was exhausted but I would talk to her anyway. You can probably tell that the relationship didn't work out. However, when I became an evangelist for the Church, part of the commitment we took was to pray one hour each day. I decided that if I could stay up late to talk to a girlfriend then I should be as committed to the Lord. So though many days and nights we travelled and arrived late at our destination, I would stay up and finish my prayer time. It was a rewarding experience and God blessed my little efforts. I even learned that God can multiply sleep through that experience in trusting in God.

We must admit that today's Gospel is a very odd one where someone is praised for stealing by our Lord. You don't hear that too often, except maybe of the good thief who stole Heaven at the last hour. I guess we could say he was not praised so much for stealing as for being worldly and for using all that he had to look after himself with. This man was full of worldly virtue and if all there is that, then he is blessed. But there is more than the world. There is a life that lasts forever and ever.

I thought that today's Gospel very fittingly described that of the manager position. We, too, are manager. The manager loses his position because instead of building up the kingdom of his master, he builds up his own kingdom. What about us - whose kingdom are we building up with our gifts and talents? Building up the Kingdom for most of us will be simple changes in our lives. Many of the things that we do right now could be done slightly differently and we would be building eternal reward.

The point of the parable is that most of us are more versed in worldly things than the things of God. We know lots about the things that will disappear and little about the things that will last forever. We know more about being financially independent than being totally dependent on God. We know more about how to make things work on earth than we do in Heaven. We are more comfortable with the world that was created by God than the God who created the world. We do not know Him well enough to share Him with others.

Think of this: would you go to a doctor who only had a grade seven education rather than medical school? Would you lie down on the table and let someone with that amount of knowledge operate on you? I think not. Yet this life will end. So why do we think that we can get away with a very small knowledge and love of the things that are going to last forever and ever. When was the last time you watch a program on the faith (and I am not talking about the history channel)? When was the last time you educated yourself on prayer and how to enter more deeply into communion with God? When was the last time you went on a retreat? Or a pilgrimage? We are savvy about going on vacations but what about our spiritual life? What about our salvation? What about putting God first?

Opus Dei (meaning the work of God) is a Catholic organization that has this motto: Ordinary work, Extraordinary grace. Most of the things we do right now, besides things that are sinful, can help build up the Kingdom of God. Think of driving. We often drive around and curse people. Yet imagine if we perceived that God has called us to pray for those people who our come to our minds. That person who is driving too slow or cut you off is actually God saying to please pray for that person. By doing that, a simple thing, we are building up the Kingdom.

Another way we can really build the Kingdom is to learn that the Kingdom wants to accompany us. One time I had a very beautiful day. I was building a project out of logs so I asked St Joseph to help me. All day long I worked with him. I had interesting ideas and was able to overcome problems and make cuts that I was never able to do before. It was an amazing day. When was the last time you invited your guardian angel to help you? What about when we are travelling, we can say to God, "If you want to use me to share your Good News I am open." If we work with God in building up His Kingdom, we will be surprised at what we accomplish.

St Isidore was a farm hand on a large property. His employer, the owner of the estate, knew him to be a conscientious and hardworking man. However, when other employees started to complain about him, saying that he wasn't working and he was praying all the time, the owner decided to look into the matter. As the owner came to the field, Isidore was supposed to be plowing but instead the owner witnessed an angel plowing with two white oxen at a much faster speed than any human being could plow. He told Isidore that he was no longer concerned about how much time he spent praying. Cardinal Merry del Val was given a new position and with his other responsibilities he did not have the time to complete his work load so he doubled his prayer time and was able to get everything done.

God once again tells us not to let money be our master and to seek first the Kingdom of Heaven because it is the most peaceful and fulfilling way to live. He wants us to build what will last forever and not be wasting our time building what will perish. However, if we want this to happen, we must pray for the grace to desire to build the Kingdom that will last forever.