

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In this weekend's Gospel, Jesus warns against greed. He says,

Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions. (Luke 12:15)

St. Paul says much the same thing in the second reading:

Put to death then, the parts of you that are earthly: ... the greed that is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5)

We live in a culture here in today's America that sees far more wealth than in Jesus' time. Think about it: we can go to the store and get anything we want... and if we don't want to go all the way to the store, we can go on-line and get it. And in our impatience, if Amazon Prime can't get it to us in two days, we get upset! We can have anything, almost immediately! While this has made life so much easier, it can create within us a sense of entitlement, as well as cultivate an illusion that money can take care of everything. This, of course, is a lie that we swallow. Money cannot take care of everything. Rich people can still get sick, tired, lonely and depressed. Wealth is not a bad thing, for we can use it for God's glory, but it cannot give us the most important things that we need – love, peace, joy.

At root, greed takes our eyes off Jesus. When we find ourselves relying on things, we forget that only God provides for our needs. We worry about protecting what we have, instead of trusting that God will always provide. When our life perspective is centered around “stuff” we find ourselves in a “zero-sum game,” that is, that if I have more of something, you have less of it, and if you have more of something, I have less, since there are limited resources. This leads to clinging and the inordinate desire for more – to keep ourselves protected and secure now and for the unknown future. This is the heart of greed – that I need to amass more and more. The center of every sin is “I,” and this is especially true with greed. Instead of looking outside ourselves to others or to God, we're focused on our own needs and wants.

Yet, God is a generous God, and He is generous with His children! When we trust in Him, He takes care of our needs (note: not always our wants, but our needs). Greed comes from the lie of the Devil. In fact, it comes from the first lie he told humanity – that God is NOT generous, that God does NOT love us, that He is NOT going to take care of us. In the Garden of Eden, He convinced Eve that God wasn't going to take care of them, and that He was keeping something desirable from her (see Genesis 3:1-6). As a result, instead of waiting for the generosity of God to give it to her, she greedily reached out to take it for herself. Do you see this? The Devil tells us that God is NOT a loving Father (a “good, good Father”) and that He will not fulfill the very desires He placed in our hearts.

And we still believe this today. If we didn't believe the lie, we would have no need to gather more and more and more, no need to worry about tomorrow (Jesus specifically tells us not to, since our Father will provide for us: Matthew 6:25-34).

So how do we fight this greed in our lives? Two ways: **generosity** and **trust**.

Generosity is the antidote to greed. Generosity speaks to the heart of who God is. He is always giving to His children – giving all good things! If you find that you are struggling with a stingy or greedy heart, the best way to overcome this is to be generous. This Spring, some of us watched Father (now Bishop) Robert Barron's series on the seven deadly sins and the seven lively virtues. One point that struck me was a way of being generous when we buy an automobile. He suggested, in order to combat the greed in our lives, when looking for a new car: when you find the car you want, a car you can afford, get a car which is the next step down and give the difference to some charity: being generous by sacrificing something of ourselves. Sacrificial generosity is powerful – it calls us out of ourselves to see the people around us. It changes our hearts. St Teresa of Calcutta shares a story of a young girl who asked that all the money that was for her First Communion dress, party and gifts be given instead to “Mother Teresa.” What sacrificial generosity!

Trust is the other way we break down greed. Building our *trust in God*, that He is really a good Father who cares for our every need. We can do this by saying often, “Jesus, I trust in You,” or by reading trust passages from the Bible (such as Matthew 6:25-34). In the moment of worry about the future, a good prayer is, “God, I don't know what's going to happen, but I know You love me, and You have promised to take care of me. Help me to choose to follow You, even when I can't see Your Hand in my life.”

May God root out from our hearts every sinful inclination to greed. May we grow every day in generosity and in trust that our God loves us and provides for our every need!