

## Homily 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2016

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You are probably wondering; what Luke means by avarice? Avarice is not a word in common usage; avarice can be defined as “extreme greed for wealth or material gain”. Why is avarice such a problem?

For me my great question is: Why am I here? Why am I here as Deacon in St Patrick’s, Blacktown at 10:30am on the 31st July, 2016. Is it pure coincidence an accident? Or, am I some small part of some cosmic plan? The answer to the question is vital to my life. I personally believe that for me the underlying message of the whole of God’s Revelation and Christ’s Incarnation is that not only am I a part of God’s cosmic plan for creation but, we individually, each and every one of us, fundamental to it. Why? Because whether we like it or not Christ resides in each and every one of us and continuously call’s us to share in His divinity. So why is the answer to the question: Why am I here? So important to my life and what’s it got to do with today’s readings?

Well if my being here is a pure accident of evolution then I will take an ego centric view of the world; it’s all about me. Like the character in Luke I will store up my

riches and enjoy myself. In the modern context the corporation becomes rich the workers will become rich a win-win situation. What the problem? I what to get rich you want to get rich these nothing wrong with that. Avarice simply is not an issue anymore, greed is good! What is wrong is best summarised by a photo taken on Christmas Eve 1968 by the crew of Apollo 8 orbiting the moon. Toward the end of the first orbit the crew witnessed a sight that no other human had seen “Earthrise”, that’s the photo you are looking at.

The Earthrise photo changed the way we viewed the Earth, it showed the Earth as a small blue sphere in the black void of space. Any delusion that the Earth was in some way an infinite resource was completely shattered. The earth is a finite resource, if I use anything, if it’s not replaced then somebody else misses out. If I use it all then there is none left, it’s as simple as that. Avarice or greed like all sin will ultimately destroy me, I may delude myself in some way but my destruction is inevitable.

The problem with greed is it skews our values, binds us, it owns us. There is a story from the Jewish tradition about a young man who wishes to be a scholar of the

Torah. He hears of a very learned Rabi in a distant town so he decides to visit. After traveling several days the young man arrives at the Rabi's very modest house, which surprises the young man who was expecting a more elaborate house for such a famous scholar. On entering the young man is further surprised at the Rabi's very basic furnishing. Finally unable to contain himself he asks the Rabi: Why don't you have any furniture? To which the Rabi replies: Young man why don't you? Astounded, the young man says: Because I am only passing through here. To which the Rabi replies: So am I. The Rabi knows he is only passing through this earthly life and he is in fact part of God's grand cosmic plan. The Rabi looks at the young man and says: Take two stones put one in each pocket. One to remind you, you are dust and the other to remind you that for you the Universe was made. The Rabi has an Eco centric view it's not about him, it's about his part in God's creation.

Possessions bind us to a place, they own us we don't own them. People of great material wealth are bound to the source of their wealth, their wealth owns them. Unlike our Rabi they do not see themselves as passing through but are bound to the source of their wealth.

Possessions are tricky things. There is no denying we need a safe place to live, we need food etc., and we need money. The question is how much. In the first reading from Ecclesiastes we read that ultimately all the things we toil for are left behind and thus the acquisition of great wealth is a vanity which will own us. But what is enough? St Paul gives us a clue “Let your thoughts be on heavenly things not on things that are on the earth.” Paul speaks of our “old self” and our “new self”. Our “old self” is focused on earthly things our “new self” is focused on heavenly things. What the monk Thomas Merton would call our true-self and false-self. Our true-self is the part of us known to God. Our false-self is our persona which we create. In today’s Gospel when the rich man talks to his soul about his wealth he is talking to his false-self, the image of himself he has created. In death our false-self dies it is stripped away along with our earthly possessions all that is left is our true-self the part known to God.

We need to sustain ourselves on our earthly journey without destroying creation. How? A clue can be found in the relationship of Aboriginal people to the land. Archaeologists have found sites a Lake Mogo in south western NSW 61,000 years old, so these people’s

wisdom must be acknowledge. As non-Indigenous person I consider my block of land as something I own, or simply 'home'. For Aboriginal people the relationship is much deeper. The land owns Aboriginal people and every aspect of their lives is connected to it. They have a profound spiritual connection to land. They realise they are custodians of creation a creation that owns them. Aboriginal people are under no disillusion they know they are just passing through

The readings today urge me to focus on heaven and realise like the Aboriginal people that I am only passing through and that is should only use what we need for my journey.

Deacon George Bryan

31<sup>st</sup> July, 2016