

HOMILY ~ 32nd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME NOVEMBER 9/10, 2024

When I was in Seminary, I went on a month long mission trip to Brazil. We stayed in a small town called Nova Descoberta, outside of Recife. I had never experienced such poverty. We do not have this kind of poverty in our country. There were no social programs. I went to schools, and there were no books. The people were terribly poor, and they had no hope of ever getting out of this poverty. Most were illiterate and spoke only Portuguese. The only person who spoke any English at all was the priest with whom we were staying. Each day the people gathered outside to pray the Rosary. The first time we went, we noticed that they had only one Rosary among them. Different people would lead a decade, and they would pass around the Rosary. We had collected religious articles here before we left, and we had a whole box of Rosaries. We decided we would take them the next day and hand them out to all the people. The next day, we began to pass out the Rosaries; but the people were reluctant to take them. We did not know why because we could not understand what they were saying. After we prayed the Rosary, they all began to give them back. We tried to tell them that they were a gift, but they did not want to keep them. Just then, the priest we were staying with arrived. We asked him why the people did not want to keep the Rosaries. He asked one of the people and they said, *"We do not need them, we have one. Give them to someone who needs them."* That is so different from people's attitudes in this country. When was the last time you turned down something free whether you wanted or needed it or not? The people there were very poor, and they seemed detached totally from material possessions.

In the Gospel Reading, we heard the story of the widow's mite. Widows were the most vulnerable group of people at that time. They could barely survive unless they found a man to take care of them. That widow gave all that she had to God. She trusted that God would take care of her. Do you think the message of today's Gospel is that we give everything we have to the Church? That would be irresponsible because if we did that, then we would not be able to take care of ourselves or take care of the people for whom we are responsible. I think the lesson is that the quality of our offering is more important than the quantity of our offering. We should be careful not to become too attached to money and property. I am going to suggest that we spend a little time praying about whether or not you are too attached to money and material possessions.

The thing that makes this difficult is that there is no clear answer. You have to decide what is right for you. The Church has taught for years that we should tithe, or give 10% of our gross income to charity. This may be right for you. Some cannot give that much, some can give more. If you appreciate what is happening at St. Edith, pray about what you can afford to give to keep everything going. Maybe you cannot afford to give money. Maybe you can volunteer to help with one of the programs you appreciate. How attached are you to possessions? You may think that material possessions will make you happy; but once you get them, they may make you happy in the moment. Then you just go on to the next thing that you want. The more you have the more energy it takes to take care of it all. I think we spend the first half our lives collecting stuff, and the second half trying to get rid of it. Parents realize that their children do not want their stuff. They have a house full of stuff of their own. When you die, someone is going to put a dumpster in your driveway, get rid of all of your stuff and someone else will be living in your home very soon. When do we have enough money? When do you need to stop working the overtime, spend more time with your family and do other things to help people? Do you really want to buy a vacation home? Do you want to take care of a second home and then feel like you have to spend every vacation there because you are paying for it? Some financial planners will tell you that you have to have millions of dollars to be happy in retirement. I will never have a million dollars, but I think I will be fine in retirement. Sometimes we spend so many years in saving mode, we cannot switch into spending mode when we have enough. I think parents would like to leave something to their children, but they probably do not want your stuff. Maybe you should be spending the money on them now and enjoying it with them rather than giving them something to fight over after you are gone. I can just ask the questions. I certainly cannot answer them for you. How attached are you to money and material possessions? Would you take the free Rosary?

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim