

17th Sunday of Ordinary Time (C)
August 1, 2010

Today's readings could easily be used in the context of a Funeral Mass because they are all about death and new life – our earthly death that we experience here and a new life that awaits us in that heavenly kingdom with all the saints and angels and those who have gone before us in faith.

As we look deeper into this – let's take a look at our first reading from Ecclesiastes. For Ecclesiastes, life was all that there was and is. When we die, that's it...end of story, period.

How sad this is for someone without faith – to believe that this is all there is and that there's nothing more, nothing great than this life here on earth.

But, our Christian belief offers us another possibility, another reality – that of eternal life in the heavenly kingdom.

This eternal life – do we believe in it? Do we live our lives in a way so as to witness it for others? Have we made reaching eternal life our goal, our focus, our endpoint of life? If so, how are we going to achieve it?

Well, to achieve any goal, we need a plan.

We all have goals – whether we are students, parents, single, retirees, etc.

We all have goals in our studies and classes, in our work, in our hobbies, etc.

Fr. Dave's goal – preparation for competing in a triathlon

My goal – see how long I can last on my motorcycle without getting off

My families' (nieces and their friend) goals – ride a unicycle, discover a unicorn, make more money than her husband so she can tell him what to do.

We all have goals, but hopefully we all share one common goal – that of eternal life and having the plans to reach / achieve it.

Having a plan means we have to have the right focus / frame of mind.

So, a goal of eternal life means our sights must be on Christ and eternal things and not on things of this world / temporary things.

Secondly, having a goal of eternal life and a plan to reach this goal means recognizing known variables and factors.

So, we know from our goal that this life is passing. We all will die someday – that’s part of life. Do we realize this, understand this in a healthy way, accept it, and live it in our lives?

Our readings today help us to realize this and focus on this and think about this – the fact that this life is passing.

St. Paul tells us: “Seek what is above,” “Think of what is above, not of what is on earth,” and “Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly.”

St. Luke tells us: “Guard against all greed” and “One’s life does not consist of possessions.”

Now, our writers are not saying in this that having material possessions is bad in itself. That is not what they are saying at all.

Rather, they are saying that all the stuff we have – the houses, money, clothes, cars, boats, education, toys – do we realize that they are all gifts given to us by God who loves us dearly?

We have done nothing to deserve all that we have. Do we know this and are we thankful to God for granting us all the blessings and gifts He has given to us?

Secondly, are we using all that we have to do God’s will – to spread His messages, to bring about His kingdom on earth, to help convey His glory and will, not our own?

Are we using our gifts from God to do communicate His kingdom and glory because that’s their purpose and that’s why God freely gave them to us?

And so, the challenge and mission before us now is are we doing all this in a way that when our time comes and our life is demanded of us, God will not say, “You fool,” but rather, “Well done my good and faithful servant; come and receive the kingdom of God that has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

May we make this our goal.