

# Homily for the 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 13-14, 2018

Readings: Wisdom 7:7-11; Hebrews 4:12-13; Mark 10:17-30

Preachers: Deacon Mike and Kathi Piehler

Our family has been in the business of selling automobiles for over 66 years. And as such we have many stories about the people who come in to buy cars.

One particular evening a man had been negotiating with the salesman for several hours and it was well past closing. Mike went into the salesman's office, introduced himself as the owner and the customer said, "I don't think you really want to sell this car; the price is too high." Mike produced the factory invoice stating the exact amount he paid for the car from the manufacturer. Mike then asked the customer, "How much of a profit do you think I should make?" The customer replied, "Nothing! *Get it from the next guy.*" Whereas Mike replied, "You *are* the next guy." The reason we share this story with you is not to sell cars but to emphasize the message of today's Gospel.

It's funny what money can do to us sometimes, isn't it? The just man in today's Gospel was told by Jesus that he was lacking in just one thing—he needed to sell what he had and give it to the poor. This man had many possessions and went away sad. Jesus had touched a nerve.

Dear brothers and sisters, in the eyes of this Gospel we are all wealthy to some degree and Jesus knew that if he wanted to get our attention, that if he wanted to get a message through to us, all He had to do was to talk about our money.

"It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God." Does Jesus have your attention now? He's got ours. In other words, how do we as Christians deal with our prosperity? It has often been said that for every 100 people who can stand adversity only one can stand prosperity.

Wealth and materialism are important issues for a Christian. Certainly, we all have to make a living and while wealth is not intrinsically evil—and in fact, can do much good—it can also become one of the Lord's greatest competitors. And why? Because we can easily depend upon it as our primary source of security. It

can buy us friends, buy us loyalty, buy us access and power. It can buy us drugs and sex. It can drive us to become obsessed with accumulating it. It can take over our lives.

Wealth can cause some people to put huge walls around their houses and dark-tinted windows on their cars. Wealth can cause us to isolate ourselves from others. It can drive us apart as spouses (money is the number 1 reason for divorce), as families (after Dad dies, who gets his money?) and as people of God (sin of envy). Our wealth can make us think we are so independent that we depend on no one—not even God—and that’s the rub. And that’s the point of today’s Gospel.

The rich man was lacking in one thing. Despite his piety and his obedience to the commandments, for which Jesus truly loved him, he lacked one necessary thing: True dependence on God. He had a moral life but he really didn’t have a spiritual life. And if the Gospel is about anything, it’s about our spiritual lives. Where does our treasure truly lie? The point of the Gospel is not so much about what we have, it’s about what we don’t have, about what we are lacking in our spiritual lives—true dependence on Him. *He* is where our treasure, our salvation, truly lies.

The consequences of this Gospel are very real:

- We must be vigilant so that materialism does not dominate our lives and replace our need for God.
- We must live within our financial means so as not to put undue financial pressures on our marriages, our families and ourselves.
- And we must be financially generous. It is about our common Christian call to invest in God’s work, especially His work with the least among us. This is truly an excellent investment.

So, when you and I are called to share our hard-earned money with those in need, is our response to the Lord going to be the same as the late-night customer in the car dealership when he said, “Get it from the next guy!” *Or* are we going to realize that “*We are the next guy*” upon whom the Lord depends.

Dear brothers and sisters, money is a responsibility. As the theologian William Barclay points out, “We will always be judged by two standards: How we got our

possessions and how we use them. The more we have the greater the responsibility that rests upon our shoulders. Will we use what we have selfishly or generously? Will we use it as if we had undisputed possession of it or will we use it remembering that we hold it in stewardship from God?"

Let us all stand guard, as Barclay continues, "lest the worldliness and materialism of today teach us to know the price of everything but the true value of nothing!"

**New "Bio" for this one homily:**

Mike and Kathi Piehler have been married for 46 years; are the parents of a son and a daughter and have 6 grandchildren. Mike has been the owner of the Piehler Automotive Group representing many car franchises in Rochester over the years. He was ordained to the Permanent Diaconate in 1984. Kathi completed her Masters in Theology in 1986. Mike ministered at St. Francis Xavier and Church of the Transfiguration for over 30 years and is now retired from active ministry but continues to serve part-time. During Mike's assignment at Transfiguration Kathi was also on the Church's staff as Pastoral Associate where she preached both on her own, as well as "team preaching" with Mike on a regular basis; he from the altar, she from the ambo.