



Homily for 10/14/2018

28<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time, Year B

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*The Emperor's New Clothes*

From the Letter to the Hebrews:

“No creature is concealed from him,  
but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him  
to whom we must render an account.”

Hans Christian Anderson wrote a short story entitled, “The emperor’s new clothes.”

Wikipedia gives the following plot synopsis:

A vain emperor who cares about nothing except wearing and displaying clothes hires weavers who promise him they will make him the best suit of clothes. The weavers are con-men who convince the emperor they are using a fine fabric invisible to anyone who is either unfit for his position or "hopelessly stupid". The con lies in that the weavers are actually only pretending to manufacture the clothes; they are making make-believe clothes which they mime. Thus, no one, not even the emperor nor his ministers can see the alleged "clothes", but pretend that they can for fear of appearing unfit for their positions, and the emperor does the same. Finally, the weavers report that the suit is finished, they mime dressing him, and the emperor marches in procession before his subjects. The townsfolk uncomfortably go along with the pretense, not wanting to appear unfit for their positions or stupid. Then, a child in the crowd, too young to understand the desirability of keeping up the pretense, blurts out that the emperor is wearing nothing at all, and the cry is taken up by others. The emperor realizes the assertion is true but continues the procession.

Wisdom, be attentive! The devil is the greatest of con-men and we fall into his traps more often than we like to admit. And even when we realize the falsehood of our ways and the things we are persuaded with, out of stubborn pride we tend to continue the procession! The reality is that we are all duped through life by the great con-man, the devil. He tries to persuade us with many a vanity and we fall hook-line-and-sinker for them. Wealth and possession are ones that very much persuade us in our affluent society. Even our poor are richer than the rich of many countries in the third world. We have so many expectations from our wealth and assumptions about our well-being that may be true for our physical/material being but is the bane of our spiritual side. Blessed are the poor, having nothing but the spirit they cultivate those riches that neither moth can decay nor thief steal. The Scriptures today speak very clearly about Wisdom and about Wealth. The two are not mutually exclusive, but they often do stand in opposition to one another. Just like the sweet tooth is not excluded from being healthy, but the sweet tooth will only find health with great moderation and discipline against his desire for sugar.

So, too, the wealthy must realize that wisdom is not found in the pursuit of profit, but rather the responsible use of the goods entrusted to them. With great wealth comes great responsibility.

We so often fall into the trap of the allure of money. We get a sense of security from it. We have the built-in matrix to say that rich people are successful people that if you have talent, you use it for financial gain. Is that true wisdom? If it were so, would there be any successful and talented people in the non-profit sector?



Jesus teaches us another way. Be wary of the lure of riches. They often promise something they cannot give. You cannot buy happiness. Now, you can buy temporary pleasure. You can buy temporal happiness with money. But the reality is you can't take material wealth with you after you die. So why invest in that which will pass away? Where is the wisdom in that? Why do people invest in real estate? Because its value always increases. Here is the Wisdom of the Gospel: make sure your portfolio is made up more of things that matter to heaven than things that are short term and earthly. Why not invest in those things which never pass away and are eternal? This is the wisdom that Jesus brings. What does this investment consist of? I would suggest starting with the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy:

To feed the hungry;  
To give drink to the thirsty;  
To clothe the naked;  
To harbour the harbourless;  
To visit the sick;  
To ransom the captive;  
To bury the dead.

To instruct the ignorant;  
To counsel the doubtful;  
To admonish sinners;  
To bear wrongs patiently;  
To forgive offences willingly;  
To comfort the afflicted;  
To pray for the living and the dead.

Wisdom, be attentive. Don't let the con-man the devil dupe you any longer! If you have wealth, realize your responsibility towards the common good. And if you find yourself naked in a crowd, don't just keep marching along in procession! Repent and turn to the Lord who will clothe you with mercy and love!