

September 23, 2007

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Luke 16: 1 – 13

### Multi-tasking Mammon

Most of us think we're pretty good at multi-tasking these days. We've probably all seen those who think they can listen to the radio, talk on their cell phone, drive and shave or put on make-up at the same time. Doing the laundry and cooking dinner is easy. In Amsterdam I saw people riding bicycles while eating, and at least one intrepid gentlemen was reading a book perched on his handlebars! I used to argue with my parents that I could successfully do homework and listen to the radio at the same time.

We think we're good at keeping priorities in the foreground, but probably not as good as we think. Authorities tell us that talking on a cell phone or text messaging while driving is equivalent to driving drunk. Urgent things don't always get our attention.

Jesus warns us urgently that we can't multi-task Mammon and our Catholic lives. Mammon has been portrayed as a greedy monster and most of us need to wage a constant battle to keep it at bay. Mammon is money, power, respect, security – pursued at first for the enjoyment they bring, then later for their own sakes.

Such fruits of success are not bad when they are shared, but when these fruits become our life's passion, they possess us. To what ends will we go to protect the boat, vacations abroad, fine wine cellars, houses and properties the size of a small village? How much of our care, concern and cash goes to charities, including the church?

Imagine for a moment if the country clubs, the beach clubs or the tennis club operated like charities; they could levy no initiation fees or annual dues. Open membership, contribute what is possible and fair. And oh yes, the amount each person contributes was secret. How would that system work out?

A generation ago, it was common practice for the church to publish the amounts each family donated to the weekly collection in bulletins and journals. Imagine!

We might be uncomfortable for good reason that prodigious charitable giving was made public, or that if our donations were small, they are truly the "widow's mite." But if we're uncomfortable because our private charitable giving would seem meager in light of our conspicuous public spending, then we have a mammon problem.

Think for a moment, how much did I spend last year to pay fewer taxes? When was the last time we gave something to someone else for our own good, not for theirs?

If our charitable spending vs. luxury spending is out of whack, we must do something to diminish the discrepancy. There are so many worthy charities, we can always find one or more whose cause we support.

We've heard the expression "You are what you eat." It's also true, "We become what we love." Let us share what we have with others so, we become more Christ-like. We really have no alternative. Otherwise we'll slowly come to resemble Benjamin Franklin.