

Homily, September 19, 2010
Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Amos 8:4-7; Psalm 113:1-2,4-6,7-8; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; Luke 16:1-13



"For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ... who will trust you with true wealth?"



In today's reading, Jesus spoke to his disciples about prudence, about being trustworthy, and the nature of wealth. He lamented that people motivated by their vices and worldly concerns are often better about managing their affairs than his disciples.

That sounds harsh, but it's probably true more often than not. But to reflect properly on what he is saying, I think we have to recollect what prudence is and what Jesus is talking about when he speaks of true wealth.

Prudence, as defined in the dictionary, means to govern yourself with reason or to manage your affairs wisely and skillfully.

Prudence is also a Christian virtue, and in that sense it means the discernment of the good and choosing the correct means to accomplish it.

"*True Wealth*" is a little harder to describe with a short definition, however, there is a story about St. Lawrence that speaks to the nature of true wealth, so let me recount it briefly:



Lawrence was a deacon under Pope Sixtus II during a period of persecution. When the Pope was arrested and killed, Lawrence knew that it wouldn't be long before they came for him too.

As the administrator of the Church's property, he quickly decided to give what wealth the Church had to the poor, the widows and the orphans of Rome.

When the Prefect of Rome heard the rumors of what Lawrence's was doing, he demanded that Lawrence give to him the Church's wealth ... for the Emperor.

Lawrence surprised him and readily agreed, telling the prefect that he would indeed give him the true wealth of the Church.

Lawrence arranged to meet him in three days at the Church. Then he went out into the streets of Rome seeking out the poor, the crippled, the widows, and the orphans.

On the appointed day, early in morning before the prefect was to arrive, all the people Lawrence had contacted and many others besides began to gather in the church. When the prefect arrived, he looked at the crowd and turned to Lawrence and angrily demanded to know what this was all about.

Lawrence looked for a moment at the prefect, then turned and raised his arm toward the people. "These," he said simply, "are the treasure of the Church."



What Lawrence did was pretty dramatic. He was killed for his cleverness. But his insight was simple and doesn't require heroic action. Lawrence knew that what matters isn't money, but people. Love your neighbor as yourself. It's not rocket science.

Charity – love – is the currency of Christianity. It points to the nature of true wealth. So be clever and prudent in caring for relationships and your actions toward other people. You receive grace from God not to hoard it up, but transform it into human love. That is how you manage true wealth.

Lawrence had another insight too. He knew he was going to die, so he chose prudently how to live. We know we aren't going to live forever and we really don't know how long we have. It would be prudent to keep that in mind.

Love isn't just an emotional state, for love to be fulfilled we have to manifest it. It requires us to place our talents in the service of others and act on our good inclinations. Manage the wealth you have been given says Jesus. You can't bury it the ground, you have to invest it.

You don't have to become a martyr like Lawrence, but you may have to sacrifice some of your time in order to manage your true wealth.

If you are prudent, you will think carefully about your talents and inclinations and find a way to use them effectively, even if it's only in small ways. Little investments can pay big dividends.

In our Archdiocese, in the city of Omaha, there are so many opportunities to invest wisely the wealth God has given to you.

Let me run briefly down the list of investment opportunities and I want you to listen until something resonates with you. Then think and pray about making that investment.

Children & Youth

- Boys & Girls Clubs
- Coaching or assisting with any number in any number of sports

Clerical or Office Work

- Durham Western Heritage Museum
- Public Library

Domestic Violence

- Catholic Charities
- Heartland Family Services

Elderly

- Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging
- Visit the shut-ins in our parish

Environmental/Sustainability

- Work on the parish garden project
- Pick up trash in you neighborhood or adopt a stretch of highway.

Family Outreach

- Catholic Charities
- St. Vincent De Paul Society

Food Pantries

- Food Bank
- Help with our monthly food drive

Homeless Shelters

Hospital Work/Health Care

- Volunteer at a hospital
- Visiting Nurse Association

Working with Individuals with Disabilities

- Special Olympics

Tutoring/Mentoring/Literacy

- Big Brothers and Big Sisters
- Jesuit Middle School
- Any local elementary, middle or high school

Spanish or Other Language Skills

- One World community Health Center
- OPS Adult Education

Social Justice/Community Education and Outreach

- Urban League
- Community Bicycle Shop of Omaha

Physical Labor

- City Sprouts
- Habitat for Humanity

These are just a few of the opportunities. If you need more check the bulletin, the parish web site or contact Catholic Charities.

We have been admonished by the Lord to use our wealth prudently. What is prudent may be different for each of us, what matters is that we act. Invest wisely.