

**18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Homily by Deacon Jim Olshefski**  
**July 31, 2022**

Mary and I are headed to France in a little over a week. There, we will visit our daughter's family, including our family's newest member, Margaux Alena, who was born on June 20. Before we know it, Margaux will be learning to talk. The first words that she will probably learn are "Maman" and "Papa," the French equivalents of "Mommy" and "Daddy." Shortly thereafter, I suspect she will learn the word all too common to small children around the world: "No!" But then, I expect she will soon increase her vocabulary with the defiant word: "Mine!" (As in, "mine, mine, mine!") Everything that she sees or comes in contact with, she will consider to be hers. That's a common trait for us humans; we seem to be born with the "greed gene." However, over time, most of us tend to grow out of that greedy phase of our lives, when, in Kindergarten, we learn to share. In today's Gospel parable, the "foolish rich man" never seems to have gotten over that inborn human condition of "wanting more."

Today's readings offer us the opportunity to re-align our lives; an invitation to recognize the foolishness, the vanity, of the human condition and to "seek what is above" and not be focused on "what is on earth," as we hear in St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians. St. Paul further challenges us to "put to death...the parts of [us] that are earthly: Immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and...greed." Rather, we are urged to direct our lives toward that which "is hidden with Christ in God."

This invitation to re-align our lives continues in today's gospel passage which begins right after Jesus has spoken to the crowd about the Holy Spirit. Then—out-of-the-blue—someone raises an issue from an all-too-common family dispute: "Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me." Jesus responds by telling us to "guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions." He further teaches us through the parable of the self-centered, "foolish rich man," who, being blessed with a bountiful harvest, keeps it all for himself. He sins, therefore, on two fronts:

- He fails to thank God who is the source of that bountiful harvest, and,
- He fails to share his blessings with those less fortunate than he.

Notice that Jesus is NOT begrudging the man for his bountiful harvest; it's the "foolish rich man's" reaction to his unexpected windfall to which Jesus objects. His response is the sin of greed, pure and simple; he doesn't share it with those who have less but plans to hoard it in new barns.

But a bigger crop or money, itself, is not the issue. Pope Francis has said, "Money contributes greatly to many good works for the development of the human race, but when your heart is attached in this way, it destroys you." As Jesus cautions today, "guard against all greed." "How many families," the Pope asks, "have we seen destroyed by problems over money: Brother against brother, father against son? When a person is attached to money, he destroys himself, he destroys his family."

We may not be rich farmers ourselves, but we have all been blessed with a variety of gifts, an abundant crop. We need to be thankful to God and willing to share with others the benefits of that crop.