



“I am going to give away everything I have”

Reflection for the 18th Week of the Year – 3 August 2025

Mgr Daniel McHugh

Blessed are the poor in spirit (Mt 5:3)

Watching TV News on Sky and BBC you can't avoid being impacted by promotions of all sorts. One that has stuck me is of Bill Gates, the head of Microsoft, who comes on to tell us “I am going to give away everything I have.” He and his wife Melinda are very rich and they have decided to use their riches to help some of the poorest in the world through the Gates Foundation. I see the sense of fulfilment that is there in the assistance it gives to the many causes it espouses.

I must admit I don't know anything of the Faith background of Bill and Melinda Gates, but I do see their action with regard to the use of their wealth reflected in the Gospel parable for the 18th Sunday of the Year.

In Chapter 12 of St Luke's Gospel, Jesus instructs his disciples and the crowd on how to be ready for the coming judgement. Responding to a shout-out from a man in the crowd: “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me” he said: “Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of one's possessions.”

Jesus tells the crowd a parable. A rich man's lands have yielded more crops than expected. His response is not to consider how he might share all the extra food with others, but to wonder how he can possibly store it all: he tears down his present barns and builds larger ones. Then he will have many things stored up for years of eating, drinking and making merry. “You fool” is God's response. “This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, where will they be?” So is the one who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God i.e. “in what matters to God”. Interestingly centuries later (Sunday Connection points out) St Gregory the Great, who we remember especially for sending St Augustine and a group of monks to England, taught that when we care for the needs of the poor, we are giving them what is theirs, not ours. We are not just performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice. Life does not consist in possessions but in sharing what we possess with others. The goods of the earth have been given to everyone.

The Gospel is certainly a challenge, the Way of Jesus is constantly put before us by the Church. St Paul spells it out in the reading to the Colossians for the 18th Sunday where he says: “If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on

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things that are on earth.....Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

The Jubilee Year offers us a special opportunity to put the past behind us and go forward in Hope. One of the practices central to it is entering through the Holy Door. This can be done in many designated Churches such as St Chad's at local level. Personally I look forward to going through the Holy Door at St Peter's in Rome when I take part in the Jubilee of Migrants at the Vatican at the beginning of October. I was reminded of this special occasion when I read the commentary of Father Patrick Van der Vorst on a painting by René Magritte, *L'embellie* (The Improvement). "It is of an open door standing in a dimly lit, greyish foreground. But, through the doorway, a completely different world is revealed: a glowing, golden light pours in from beyond, illuminating the threshold with warmth and life. The contrast is striking, from shadows to light, from dullness to brilliance." Fr. Patrick Van der Vorst sees art and imagery as opening up the meaning of the truth revealed by Our Lord. Jesus himself used story and images from everyday life. In this case Fr Patrick was commenting on part of the Gospel of last Sunday where Jesus says our prayer will be answered: "Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened." He says "unlike earthly doors, God's door carries no lock. We knock and he opens. Even the smallest opening of the door is enough for his light to shine through. Christ is not only the one behind the door, waiting to receive us – He IS the door! And he concludes: "The painting suggests that while the world we inhabit may at times feel heavy or uninspired, just beyond the threshold lies something radiant, something better. Christ standing behind that door will truly transform our ordinary existence into something deeply meaningful". (See the Christian Art website)

It is not too late to accept the invitation of joining in the Jubilee Year. There are many ways of entering the door that is Christ: one is to hear the words of the Acclamation before the Gospel for this 18th Sunday "Blessed are the poor in spirit". When you google those words you get this: "It signifies that those who recognise their spiritual poverty and dependence on God will inherit the kingdom of heaven. This beatitude is not about material poverty, but rather a state of humility and recognising one's complete reliance on God." It is a good place to start!

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