

+ J. M. J.

Earlier this week the sports world was abuzz with whether or not a certain play was cheating or not. One of New York Yankees, Derek Jeter, feigned being hit by a pitch and was awarded first base. Many people that were interviewed spoke about doing everything possible to help their team reach their goal, which of course is to win.

That story helps shed some light on a difficult line that we heard in the reading from the Gospel. **“Make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings”** (Luke 16:9). On the surface this would seem to be a tacit approval of shady business practices for personal gain; however, we should know that in moral theology that doing something evil so that good may come of it is doing something that is always to do evil. Our Savior, though, in praising the dishonest steward, helps us to understand something that escapes us. Winning is everything. We just have to know what it is we are pursuing, which for Christians, the goal we pursue is the eternal prize of life in union with God. What Jesus is trying to get us to understand is that if only we were as good in the pursuit of eternal life as some shrewd people are in the arena of finances this world would look a lot different. We would see more clearly the kingdom of heaven here.

Consider the conclusion of the reading from the Gospel. **“You cannot serve both God and mammon”** (Luke 16:13). Mammon was either a Hebrew or Aramaic word that something that one puts his trust or confidence in, which is often riches or wealth. The idea is that we are either serving God, who is infinite perfection, so that we either give all to God or by hedging our bets on something else we end up serving something else. Amos helps capture that idea as he prophesies against those who on the Sabbath are looking ahead to their activities in the market which will begin as soon as sundown, when the Sabbath ends. Often these dealings are to the detriment and taking advantage of the poor. That begs an interesting question for us. If we are to be serving God wholeheartedly and we come to church to worship, what is it we are thinking of? Are we daydreaming about what will take place after Mass. Do

our concerns cause us not to concentrate on the word of God and the Eucharistic mystery but on something else? **You cannot serve both God and mammon.** If we can't worship God even wholeheartedly for an hour, and some of you make it known to us that you can't give more than an hour, if we can't, we serve something else other than God.

Actually what we should be doing is figuring out in here, as we are inspired by God, how we are going to take Christ out into the world. Yesterday we had our confirmation retreats. When I met with many of the students earlier I tried to impress upon them that many of them are able to get wherever they want even though they don't have a driver license. Yet when it comes to getting to church they give me some lame excuse that they have no one to take them. Likewise we are so good and wise at planning and figuring out to get what we want in this world. Jesus is urging us on; now let's use our intellects, our wills, our memory, etc. to spread the good news of the Gospel.

This morning, let's consider all those things that we have, all those things that we trust in that are not God, mammon so to say. Recall that when the gifts are brought forward at the offertory they represent all of our gifts, talents, possessions, cares, and concerns. Let us then figuratively offer everything that we have to be at the service of the Lord and then listen. Listen to how God would have us use our talents, our resources, everything we have to serve him and not something else. This in essence is the giving component of our year of gracious living. Winning indeed is everything, being with God in what we call heaven is everything. Let's put our finite resources at the service of this eternal goal.