

Homily 25th Sunday Year C: God or mammon

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God or mammon. Jesus in today's Gospel tells us that we must choose between these two; that we cannot make both our masters, because we cannot serve two masters.

Why not? Because we will either hate the one and love the other, or we will be devoted to the one and despise the other. We cannot love both God and mammon.

What is "mammon"? It is the Hebrew word for riches, wealth. This is the context in which Jesus uses it, in today's Gospel parable about the unjust steward who connives to keep his position as steward.

Of course, riches and wealth are not evil in themselves. People with great wealth can be very generous and fund worthy charitable causes.

But riches and wealth can easily become the predominant pursuit in our lives, which results in putting God in the backseat, or forgetting about Him completely.

People with great wealth can easily tend to think that they are self-sufficient, and that they need no one, including God, to make them happy.

The same is true regarding great fame and popularity, or great power and prestige. When these become the main focus of one's life, they become a false god.

Some people make work, and earthly success, their god.

This is why, in a broader context, mammon is a pejorative term that refers to any created thing that weakens or breaks our relationship with God.

I have a good priest friend who admits that, in the days of his youth, and before he took his faith seriously, golf was his "god." Every Sunday he spent the day on the golf course.

There are parents who make their children their "god," carting them around to sporting events almost every weekend, but sadly, neglecting to worship God as they ought. And what are they teaching their children?

Here's a fundamental question: Why would anyone choose money, or any other earthly good - such as popularity, political power, etc., why would

someone choose these over God? The reason is: A lack of faith in God, or ignorance of him, or both; and failure to have a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the Way to the Father.

Earlier today I along with a number of other people stood outside the Planned Parenthood clinic in Waukegan Illinois, praying the Rosary and holding pro-life signs. I held my blown-up photo of an unborn child in the amniotic sack. It's a beautiful photo which shows a little baby at 10 weeks old with a body perfectly formed.

Most people driving by on Lewis Avenue honked their horns and waved to us, or gave us a thumbs up. But a good number of people yelled out obscenities, or held up their middle finger at us. I don't think these people have a strong personal relationship with Jesus. When I encounter such people, I pray for them. As St. Paul tells us (2nd reading), God want all to be saved.

So, how do we deepen our faith and grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ - in order that we may always choose God over mammon? First and foremost, we need to pray.

What is prayer? Prayer is lifting our minds and hearts to God, a conversation with God.

In order to have a personal relationship with someone, we have to talk with them, converse with them. And we have to do so daily if we want to have a deep personal relationship with God, and with Jesus, our Savior – something all of us should be striving for.

Practically, how do we do this? We have to make sure that we schedule a time within our day for prayer, for conversation with God.

If we don't schedule in prayer, we won't pray. Believe me, I know this from first-hand experience.

And how do we pray? There are many ways. We can read the Bible slowly and meditate on a verse that strikes us; we can pray the Rosary and meditate on the mysteries of the life of Jesus, and of Mary.

Praying is the pathway to God. Because of our fallen nature, without daily prayer, we tend to love ourselves, and the things of this world, more than God – who created us, and everything in the world.

Without daily prayer, we cannot love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength; nor can we truly love our neighbor as we should – that's the Opening Prayer for today's Mass.

Without daily prayer, and a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we will not be able to walk daily in the footsteps of Jesus, and take up our daily cross, as He commands us.

Without daily prayer, we will forget the whole purpose of our existence: to know, love, and serve God in this life, in order to be happy with Him forever in Heaven.

In fact, without daily prayer, we cannot keep our eyes fixed firmly on Heaven. That's why St. Paul (2nd reading) urges us to pray at all times.

The Saints are our models in faith and in prayer. Yesterday, on the calendar of the traditional Latin Mass, the Church celebrated the feast day of the stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi. Two years before he died, St. Francis received the marks of Jesus Christ on his body: the piercing of his hands, feet, and side, as a living sign of his conformity with Jesus Christ.

This coming Friday, we celebrate the feast of a spiritual son of Francis of Assisi – Padre Pio, now St. Padre Pio, who bore the stigmata on his hands, feet and side for 50 years.

Both St. Francis and St. Pio were men of great faith, who came to know Jesus Christ by their deep and profound life of prayer. Let us us ask these two great Saints to pray for us, that through our daily prayer we may grow in faith, in order that we may always choose God over mammon.