

The Paper Pulpit

(Reflections from the Pastor)

8th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Our Lord tells us today in Matthew's Gospel, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. If you try, you'll become anxious." What does the expression "serving two masters" and "being anxious" have in common? They both have the same root problem – being divided within oneself. The root word for "anxiety" literally means "being of two minds." An anxious person is often paralyzed by fear, indecision, and insecurity. Fear of some bad outcome cripples those afflicted with anxiety. It's also the case with someone who wants to live in two opposing kingdoms: God's kingdom of light, truth, and goodness or Satan's kingdom of darkness, sin, and deception.

Who is the master in charge of your life? Our "master" is whatever governs our thought-life, shapes our ideals, and controls the desires of our heart and the values we choose to live by. We can be ruled by many different things: the love of money and possessions, the power of position and prestige, the love of sports, the glamour of wealth and fame, unruly passions, harmful desires, and addictive cravings. Ultimately the choice of who is our master boils down to two: God or "mammon". What is mammon? "Mammon" stands for "material wealth or possessions" or whatever tends to "control our appetites and desires." Another way to put it is, whatever keeps us from God becomes our god - our mammon. For example, if your child plays hockey on Sunday and you miss Mass. Hockey is your mammon. If you choose to "sleep in" on Sunday morning and miss Mass, rest becomes your mammon. You cannot serve God and mammon. And this creates anxiety.

The Lord Jesus Christ alone can save us from all that would keep us bound up in fear and anxiety. Jesus used an illustration from nature (the birds and the flowers) to show how God provides for his creatures in the natural order of his creation. God provides ample food, water, light, and heat to sustain all that lives and breathes. How much more can we, who are created in the very image and likeness of God, expect our heavenly Father and creator to sustain not only our physical bodies, but our mind, heart, and soul as well? Anxiety is neither helpful nor necessary. It robs us of faith and confidence in God's help and it saps our energy for doing good. Jesus admonishes his followers to put away anxiety and preoccupation with material things and instead to seek first the things of God—his kingdom and righteousness. Anxiety robs the heart of trust in the mercy and goodness of God and his loving care for us. God knows our needs even before we ask and gives generously to those who trust in him. Who is your master: God or mammon? Jesus says we can't serve both.

It's cold out (in) there: Many of you know that it has been cool in church. Many of you have told me how cool you have been keeping your homes and thanked me for being sensitive to fuel costs as you are keeping a watch on your own costs. With the cost of propane at over \$4.00 a gallon for a period of time (and the unknowing of availability), things are tight. Others have wished we kept it warmer. I understand their concerns as well. I tend to err on the side of saving. As a child my mom told me to put on a sweater if I was cold.

We've used a lot of propane this year. Since November 11th, 2013 when we had our first fill of propane for the winter, we have purchased 5,823 gallons of propane at St. Max's and 2,202 gallons of propane at the St. Pat's site. There was a time we were not sure we were even able to get propane.

But, also influencing the decision to keep the church cooler is.....In January we became aware we needed to replace one of our boilers. We were operating on one boiler this winter. If that boiler would have gone out, we could have been in trouble (probably froze up). Thus another reason for keeping the church cooler was to not overwork our one working boiler.

That boiler was replaced two weeks ago. Thank you for those who have contributed to the building fund as those dollars paid for the cost of the new boiler (around \$13,000 with repairs). Thus we did not need to go to the parishioners asking for money.

We will also be spending between \$4,000-\$5,000 with updates and repairs at the St. Pat's Church. Again, that will be paid with dollars collected for the building project and again not having to ask you for money.

But I have to ask you for some money.

Diocesan Annual Appeal: Thank you to those who already made their pledge. There is no pledge too big or small. To help make our goal, three donors will pay up to \$4,500 if they are matched by new dollars (for a total of \$9,000) received by the end of March.

For those who have never pledged before, there has never been a better time. I am really encouraging new/first time givers. We need everyone's (not almost everybody's) help. If you can only afford \$20, that is OK. That will be matched to become \$40. A \$50 donation will become \$100. A \$500 donation becomes \$1,000.

For those who already made a pledge and want to take advantage of this offer, why not do so right now. Your additional pledge will also be matched.

When we go over our goal, 100% of the money comes back to the parish.

Please contact me directly if you have any questions or would like to make a pledge or make an additional pledge. It would be greatly appreciated. Additional pledge cards are available in the parish office or at the edge of your pews. Don't wait.

Bible Study: Bible Studies to resume on March 4th. Mass at 6:00pm followed by a light supper followed by the bible study. Come for part or all the evening. All are welcome.

Sincerely in Christ, Fr. Jim Trempe