

## 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

Kathleen Osbelt, OSF

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All Saints Church, Syracuse, NY

Have you ever experienced these toddler's rules of possession?

"If I like it, it's mine.

If it's in my hand, it's mine.

If I can take it from you, it's mine.

If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.

If it looks just like mine, it's mine.

If you are having more fun with it, it's now mine."

And what is the teaching that follows? "We have to share" We all grew up with that teaching.

It sounds simplistic, but that is exactly what today's readings are all about. Our first reading from Ecclesiastes warns: "Vanities of vanities. All things are vanity" coming from the Hebrew word, 'Hebel' meaning vapor. Things are transitory, passing, having no real substance. Possessions are not to be chased; a relationship with God is what lasts.

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians puts it right out there: "Put to death things that tie us to the earth."

Recently I saw an exhibit of the Terracotta Soldiers. Thousands of clay soldiers, a clay army that a pharaoh had made to protect his possessions that would be placed in his pyramid.

John D. Rockefeller died at 98, the richest man at that time. A reporter asked his aide, "How much did he leave?" The aide replied: "All of it".

Jesus, in today's Gospel calls the one who thinks he/she is saved by his/her possessions a "fool!"

Jesus warns against storing up riches for oneself! "Take care", he says, "to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

Never before these past twenty years has there been so many 'barns for storage', we call them containers, sheds. Never before have people gone shopping just to see what they would like, not because there was a need. Never before have people worked 12, 14, 16 hour days to keep up

with the cost of living in a way they have become accustomed. Never before have there been so much demand for things that people young and old are put into slave labor to produce them. Is it no wonder that so little is accomplished at the G 8 Summits? We live in a nation most in need of the parable Jesus gives us today.

St. Francis of Assisi once said that all we can take with us when we die is the love we have given. The sin of the fool in the Gospels was that he had no thought of anyone else; he was not in relationship with others. He was blind to the needs of others. He was living out of a philosophy of scarcity. "If I give away what I have, there won't be enough for me. This is my good fortune not anyone else's. This is mine."

Our blessings are not given us just for ourselves. To live out of a perspective of abundance, one has to see all as gift from God to be shared with the common good. It means that we have to make space inside us for the "other."

What I choose to do in my life always has an effect on another. The scientists call it quantum entanglement. If two particles were together then separated, then change the direction of the spin on one, the other spontaneously changes direction. You think of someone then lo and behold, you get a phone call or email from that person, it's no coincidence. We are all part of the same cosmic process. We are created to be related. We can only be co-creators by being related.

We are called to be Catholic according to the real meaning of the word. The root of the word comes from the Greek: "Kata" and "holos", meaning to make whole. We must be gatherers, whole makers. Making sure that no one is left out. Would that we could envision a community where attending to the needs of all is a priority.

I am recalling a man named Rod. He was a kind soul, a plumber by trade, who volunteered in several places, one of them being Francis House. He always wore the same freshly ironed shirt and pants. On Saturdays he would go to the market, purchase various fruits and vegetables, and then hang bags of them on the doors of some folks he knew could use them. He would give appointment rides to neighbors who couldn't drive. Apparently, never worrying about gas.. He made a practice of giving money to anyone who needed it. When Christmas came around, he'd buy bikes for kids and leave them on their front porch. All this I found out at his funeral reception. I also found out that the reason he would not let any of us come out to help him when he got sick was because he lived in a very poor, run down house which he was given to live in because he took care of the land on which it stood. I was surprised because I always thought he was rich. But then I realized, he was rich, very rich indeed!