

## **Homily For Tuesday of the 11th Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1**

### **St Peter's 8:30 AM/7:00 PM Masses - June 18, 2019**

**2 Corinthians 8:1-9** "Jesus Christ, though he was rich, for your sakes became poor, so you might be rich."

**Psalms 146** "Praise the Lord, O my soul! It is the Lord who keeps faith forever."

**Matthew 5:43-48** "Be perfect, therefore, even as your heavenly Father is perfect."

### **Perfect Giving**

#### **Introduction**

A speaker told the story of how he and his 12 year old daughter were on a tour bus, going through the inner city Chicago areas where famous gangsters operated in the Prohibition era. John Dillinger was one such gangster. He got very rich robbing banks. The tour bus driver explained to the passengers that, when Dillinger was gunned down by Police in an alley behind a theatre, he had nothing left. He was penniless. There was silence on the bus as people reflected on the gaining and losing of wealth and whether that was a tragedy or not. The 12 year old broke the silence with the comment: "What great timing."

Maybe that gangster knew that you can't take it with you so you might as well spend it all before you die. But this opens the door to a greater truth for us, that comes out in both readings today: Jesus had every richness, every grace, that is possible, and he gave it all. In the perfect timing of God, Jesus emptied himself and, if we are going to follow the law of love perfectly, we will do the same.

#### **2 Corinthians**

If the pastor of a church wanted a perfect message of stewardship, he could encourage the people of St. Peter's to complete our commitment to the Together in Action campaign for the less fortunate in our Diocese, with Paul's appeal to the Corinthians for money for the poor church in Jerusalem. This was a great weight on Paul's heart since he had been there and met the Apostles. Two thousand years later, the situation is exactly the same.

At first, Paul's appeal might sound like he is manipulating them. Look, the Macedonians were poor but they were happy to give. You Corinthians are so rich, you should do the same to show your support for the mother church, from where the gospel came and where the Christians are in great need.

But why did their generosity overflow like that? Their willingness to give abundantly, even in their own poverty, was because, first, that Jesus had great compassion for the poor. And secondly, they were living in the overwhelming joy of knowing that the grace of God had been poured out for them through Christ's holding nothing back. "The generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich."

## **Matthew**

The law in Leviticus prescribed loving one's neighbour. Nowhere in the law does it say to hate one's enemies. However, it was assumed that doing just that was quite reasonable. It would have been quite startling to hear Jesus teach, "You have heard that it was said, love your neighbour, but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Jesus is sometimes viewed as a teacher of 'niceness'. But we know it's more than that. He's not just saying all you need to do is smile and thank the person who gives you a gift or a compliment. It isn't even just loving someone who loves us, as good and proper a thing that is to do. Jesus appeals to something deeper in them.

If you only love those who it is easy to love, you aren't really living up to being the people that God has set apart. What about the person in the next cubicle at work? A woman I knew believed that she was bound for heaven because she was basically a good person, but couldn't see how that was incompatible with the fact that she couldn't stand the woman working right next to her. Jesus says your love must have the perfection of the Father of perfection himself.

## **Call To Action**

I wouldn't make a successful pastor because I would have a hard time telling people to give. But Paul is a great imitator of the chief shepherd, Jesus the Lord, who is not afraid to call people to the only level of participation in the kingdom that matters, the perfection of God himself. Obeying the law, for the Jews and for us, is required. But we have to do more than that if we want to be part of the kingdom.

The world today presents moral mediocrity as the standard. But the standard to which we are called is very high. Where do we get that standard? You know it's from Jesus himself. And he tells us it's the perfection of the Father.

One commentator points out that the love to which Jesus calls us is beyond the capacity of our fallen human nature, but the gift of the Spirit received through faith and the sacraments makes it possible.

We must cultivate the inner attitudes and dispositions that transform the heart and build up love, a love that doesn't hold back, a love that is willing to empty itself for others, like what our saviour did for us. It is only in the sacrifice that love itself demands that we become better people, people of love, children of the kingdom of love.