

“The Soul is what matters”  
Homily for August 5<sup>th</sup> 2022  
Friday 18<sup>th</sup> Friday Ordinary Time

Christopher Winans, in his book, *Malcolm Forbes: The Man Who Had Everything*, tells of a motorcycle tour that Forbes took through Egypt in 1984 with his Capitalist Tool motorcycle team. After viewing the staggering burial tomb of King Tut, Forbes seemed to be in a reflective mood.

As they were returning to the hotel in a shuttle bus, Forbes turned to one of his associates and asked with all sincerity: "Do you think I'll be remembered after I die?" Forbes is remembered. He is remembered as the man who coined the phrase, "He who dies with the most toys wins." That was the wisdom of Malcolm Forbes. In fact, that was his ambition. That's why he collected scores of motorcycles. That's why he would pay over a million dollars for a Faberge egg. That's why he owned castles, hot air balloons and countless other toys that he can no longer access.

The Lord Jesus Christ gave us words that are in striking contrast to Forbes' life statement:

***<sup>26</sup> For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?<sup>1</sup>***

This is one of the most sobering of Jesus' sayings because it seems so contrary to the evidence. From this world's perspective we conclude that a life where having it all... this is what it means to really live, Jesus would say no it isn't. It helps in understanding what Jesus is saying here to know that the word "life" would be better translated as "soul".

Jesus is saying in effect that we can be so busy living in the world that we lose sight of what really matters, the soul. Jesus is making it clear in these words that we can live our lives so that we give primacy to what is secondary and lose sight of what is really primary – our souls.

Why is the soul so important? Listen to what the Catechism teaches about it and why we do not want to forfeit and lose the soul:

***The soul is the spiritual principle of human beings. The soul is the subject of human consciousness and freedom; soul and body together form one unique human nature. Each human soul is individual and immortal, immediately created by God. The soul does not die with the body, from which it is separated by death, and with which it will be reunited in the final resurrection<sup>2</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#) (Mt 16:26). (1993). National Council of Churches of Christ.

<sup>2</sup> Catholic Church. (2000). [\*Catechism of the Catholic Church\*](#) (2nd Ed., p. 900). United States Catholic Conference.

With this is mind, do you see how perverse the motto is: “He who dies with the most toys wins?” It is in opposition to that Jesus says: We are to give attention each and every day to that which will live for all eternity and be ultimately united with the resurrection of the body that is our soul.

Jesus makes it clear that to live by placing the values of heaven first is a great challenge because the toys loom so obvious and attractive and heaven can seem so elusive and distant. This is why Jesus calls us to live intentionally by taking up our cross to follow him. This means that we will recognize how seductive the world and how easily we can be baited by the lure of the “most toys” mentality.

It was this that Nahum in the first reading describes with such graphic detail. The country of Assyria was the world power when he was writing and seemed invincible. So much booty and plunder was at their disposal – so many toys, says the prophet. But listen to the judgment that will ensue because they forfeited their soul:

***I am against you,  
says the LORD of hosts,  
and will lift up your skirts over your face;  
and I will let nations look on your nakedness  
and kingdoms on your shame.  
6 I will throw filth at you  
and treat you with contempt,  
and make you a spectacle.<sup>3</sup>***

What a devastating judgment. So how can we guard our souls from a kind of carelessness and thereby stand before Jesus having done that which will enrich our souls? Listen to the counsel of the Church in one of the Vatican II Documents: *Gaudium et Spes* whose primary author was Pope St John Paul II:

***In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths<sup>4</sup>***

May we be attentive to this voice and not be seduced by the deceptive voice characterized by the values of Malcolm Forbes motto and thereby gain our soul and eternal life.

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<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#) (Na 3:5–6). (1989). Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> Catholic Church. (2011). [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: Gaudium Et Spes](#). In *Vatican II Documents*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana.