

- The legendary Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli once wrote: *What you give away is yours, but what you don't is lost.* Something to ponder, to be sure.
- While a worldly mind will struggle to grasp the truth of this statement, hopefully as Catholics we can understand that our acts of charity redound to our eternal glory. Indeed, it is imperative that we work for that which is eternal, and not simply for worldly goods.
- As Christ Himself counsels us in His Sermon on the Mount:
- *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.*
- We store up treasure in Heaven by being generous with our earthly goods, and by practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Practicing charity by being generous with our time, talent, and treasure not only benefits the recipient of our charity; it benefits our souls.
- Practicing charity makes us more virtuous; it makes us more Christ-like and keeps us pointed toward Heaven.
- Our readings today speak of the dangers of being attached to worldly things. The Book of Ecclesiastes reminds us that while worldly riches may alleviate some sufferings, in the end they bring on other sufferings – and thus the laboring for earthly goods is vanity.
- Today's readings admonish us not to place our hopes and trust in the vanities of this world, and we are cautioned against the dangers of greed and materialism.
- Our Lord is very clear in the Gospel passage that we are to guard our hearts from all greed and not put too much stock in our material possessions. What is important is not that we are materially rich, but that we are rich in what matters to God.
- And what matters, my friends, is what we've given away, not what we've kept for ourselves.
- God doesn't care how big our houses are, what type of cars we drive, or how much money is in our bank accounts. None of these things will matter when we stand before Him on judgment day.
- With regard to our material possessions, all that will matter is how we used them to help others in need. What will matter is how we've tried to practice charity.
- What will matter is the gratitude we've shown God for all our many blessings. What will matter is how well we've loved both God and neighbor.
- Thus, our readings today should cause us to ask ourselves how much of this world's goods we really need. Certainly it's not a sin to be rich or to own many things, yet having and pursuing wealth poses some significant spiritual dangers.
- Our Lord wasn't kidding when He said it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter Heaven.
- You see, when we are blessed with an abundance of material goods, we can come to rely too much upon them and the comforts they provide, thus becoming less willing and able to endure suffering and hardship – while at the same time becoming more self-consumed.
- If we seek our happiness and joy in the things of this world, we will necessarily become greedy and materialistic, consuming whatever catches our eye with the hope of being sated.
- But the things of this world will never make us happy or give us true joy. To the contrary, focusing on the things of this world will only leave us feeling empty. That's the great sadness of the sin of greed.

- Greed can never be sated; it's a thirst that can never be quenched. Left unchecked, greed simply grows stronger within us, consuming our souls as we seek to consume the vanities of this world.
- This is why Jesus is so clear in His warning to us today, telling us to "Take care to guard against all greed."
- Worldly goods promise something they can never deliver, and worse yet, becoming attached to them makes us less capable of being attached to the One Thing that will give us real, lasting joy and peace: God Himself.
- If I may be blunt, today's readings are aimed squarely at parishes like our own, located as we are in this beautiful corner of Myer's Park. Most of us in this parish live in very nice zip codes. Most of us have far more than enough worldly goods.
- So we must heed carefully our Lord's admonitions today, for it's very easy for us to become attached to worldly goods and fall prey to their seduction.
- If we place our hopes and trust in the things of this world, we will end up like the rich man in our Gospel parable today: a fool who has nothing to show for himself on judgment day.
- So we must all learn to cultivate the virtue of generosity. When we can detach from our material possessions and share them with others with charitable abandon, we provide a protection for our souls against the evils of greed.
- This is why contributing to the support of the Church is one of the Precepts of the Church. It's why the Church promotes the concept of tithing, which means giving at least 10% of your gross earnings to charity.
- I first learned about tithing from my father as a 5-year-old. He taught me that whenever I earned some money or was given money for allowance or from gifts, I had to put 10% of it in the collection in my Sunday School class.
- What I've learned over the years in practicing tithing is that, if we are generous with God, He is always generous with us in return.
- Years ago in college I met a Catholic father with 12 kids, who told me that he never made more than \$35,000/year, yet he still managed to put all his kids through 12 years of Catholic school and college.
- When I asked him his secret, he said: "Tithing!" He always tithed 10% of his income, and in those tight moments in which he was worried about paying his bills, money always seemed to arrive in some unexpected way. That's also been true in my own life.
- You cannot outgive God. If you are generous with Him, He will be generous with you.
- If you can't give 10% because of your other bills, then give what you can and try to increase your tithe a little bit each year. Our Lord doesn't expect the impossible. But as He has been so generous with each of us with mercy, He expects us to be generous in return.
- Brothers and sisters, where do your hopes lie? In whom or what do you place your trust?
- If you are more concerned with the things of this world than you are with God, then you are placing your soul in mortal danger. Remember: *what you give away is yours, but what you don't is lost.*
- Therefore, may our souls be imbued with a spirit of Christian charity and generosity, that we may show our love of God and neighbor by being generous with our time, talent, and treasure.