

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020 A

Ask something of me and I will give it to you. What a remarkable promise! Maybe it sounds too good to be true. But Jesus also says to us: “Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you” ... and, “Whatever you ask the Father in my name, He will give you.” We can think of this offer two ways. Our minds pretty naturally go to the first way: What do I want? What will make me happy? But we might also ask ... what do I need? What will make me a better person, more like Jesus Christ, Whose name I bear? What I HAVE will come and go; who I become will endure forever.

Jesus uses the image of the dragnet to capture the truth that as we go through life, we accumulate many things ... material stuff, yes; but also intangible things like memories, knowledge, experiences, relationships – and sometimes also hurts, regrets, sorrows. Like our inboxes and kitchen counters, the net of life gets crowded and jumbled together, and that can make it hard to find what we need. The things that truly matter, the treasures God places before us – the people in our lives, time for prayer and rest, keeping our Christian balance in an unbalanced world – these can get lost in plain sight, buried in the field of our distractions, anxieties, responsibilities.

Sorting out the useful and the useless in life requires is to have some criteria we use to judge the worth and value of what fills our lives – criteria that are often subconscious and influenced by many voices around us. Much of our culture prompts us to rate people and opportunities based mostly on personal advantage, convenience or preference; or to seek what is enjoyable, or profitable, or makes us popular. God approves Solomon’s own choice, for wisdom and understanding to know what is right, because it was not about serving himself, but so that he could serve others well.

This Word can come alive for us this week if we each do two things. First, to go through the accumulated STUFF in our closets and drawers and garages, and give away at least one or two things that we really don’t need but another could use. And second, more challenging, to make a mental inventory of the intangible things God has placed in your life – the relationships, the responsibilities, the abilities, the gifts

that make each of us unique. Keep what is useful for serving others well; and if you discover something useless in God's Kingdom, some habit or attitude that is a stumbling block, pray for the wisdom and courage to throw it away. This sorting will not change life instantly, but it *will* be a beginning to something better, something new as the spiritual clutter clears away and we learn to value what matters to God.

As I learn about these new communities in our ACC and the people who have shaped them, I see so many gifts ... gifts of welcome and hospitality, family and friendship, generosity and service, prayer and openness to God. While ACCs may reflect a bit the reduced numbers of clergy, this effort is not about scarcity but abundance; not about what we might lose but what we can do better for God and one another together. A future is open before us, where the same God invites us, not in a dream at night but in the bright light of the Resurrection: "Ask something of Me and I will give it to you." *May we find, not just what we are seeking from God, but what God is looking for in us.*