

'DISCERNMENT & VULNERABILITY, FEAR & PRAYER

18th Sunday Ordinary Year C, 4th August 2019

Many could identify with the farmer in today's parable who plans in detail for a secure retirement.

WHAT THEN IS MISSING?

Let us read the Gospel first.

GOSPEL OF LUKE 12:13-21

*Someone in the crowd said to him,
'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.'*

But he said to him,

'Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?'

And he said to them,

*'Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed;
for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.'*

Then he told them a parable:

'The land of a rich man produced abundantly.

And he thought to himself,

"What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?"

*Then he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones,
and there I will store all my grain and my goods.*

*And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many
years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."*

But God said to him,

"You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you.

And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"

*So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich
towards God.'*

WHAT IS MISSING IN THE PARABLE?

We heard three weeks ago about the **Parable of the Good Samaritan** who moves beyond his comfort zone and provides for a person in need.

We heard two weeks ago about **Mary and Martha** and taking the time to listen to Jesus.

We heard last week about disciples asking Jesus how to pray and learn the way of **The Our Father**.

Now we have heard the **Parable of a Farmer**

who has *no plans to share* with others in need,

whose plans *do not include* time to pray and listen to God

and who does *not discern with God* about the present and the future.

The farmer has no room for trust.

EVERYDAY PLANNING

We all plan in different ways.

Our work can involve levels of planning, whether planting crops, repairing motors, serving customers or developing new IT gadgets.

We can plan our next holiday, our next social event, our next visit to the beach or to a picnic or football or concert.

Planning how we get the children to weekend sports or activities.

Planning when we will pick up the groceries or wash the car or go shopping.

Planning how to save. Planning our tax return, our filling out the census.

SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF PLANNING

Today's passage from Luke's Gospel invites us to ask a really important question, while we are busy planning.

DO WE TRUST GOD AND DISCERN WITH GOD, OR DO WE PLACE ALL OUR TRUST IN OURSELVES AND OUR ABILITY TO CONTROL OUTCOMES?

In our process of seeking to do God's will, to live our lives in union with God, it is helpful to *discern* where God is calling us.

AND WHAT CAN BLOCK, OR HINDER IN ME, A LOVING RESPONSE TO GOD'S INVITATION TO ME AND TO US?

Discernment is both personal and communal.

That is why our Parish Pastoral Council spends some time at every monthly meeting on formation.

We seek an openness to God forming us as a pastoral group and as a parish faith community.

TODAY'S PARABLE AND US

The farmer in today's parable puts his trust in storing up material goods for his future, not knowing that he will die soon.

His future is about himself, with no reference to love of God or love of neighbour.

He is fooling himself.

We know that we cannot control everything in our lives.

We have insurance to provide for some possibilities.

WE USE OUR WORKING AND ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS TO PROVIDE FOR WHOM?

God has given us other skills and talents also, including the gifts of praying, listening, to feel empathy with others.

Today Jesus invites us to put our *trust* in him.

To keep in contact with him as we go about our daily lives.

DAILY QUESTIONS AND PRAYER

WHATEVER IS IMPORTANT IN OUR LIVES, IS IT IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO PRAY ABOUT IT?

IS IT IMPORTANT TO LOVE?

Include God who loves you and pray daily for the people you love.

IS IT IMPORTANT TO BE LOVED?

Find ways to **thank God** for loving you.

IS IT IMPORTANT TO USE OUR GIFTEDNESS?

Ask God to help you in deciding how you use those gifts.

IS IT IMPORTANT TO SHARE OUR RESOURCES WITH OTHERS?

Ask God to show you who is your neighbour,
and how you can share with them.

WHERE IS GOD WHEN WE STUDY, AND WHEN WE ARE DEVELOPING OUR SKILLS?

Ask God for patience and perseverance when learning new things.

IS IT IMPORTANT TO REST, TO RELAX, TO RENEW OURSELVES?

Find time to **relax with God**.

IS IT IMPORTANT TO ENJOY OUR PREFERENCES IN MUSIC, IN READING, IN HOBBIES, IN EXERCISE?

Share them with God.

Trust is more than sharing who we are and what we do.

FEAR

The passage of the farmer is not just about control
and hoarding possessions and selfishness.

It is also about *fear*.

Fearing lack of control, we hoard, we become selfish.

Jesus calls us to place our trust in God,
instead of being a slave to fear.

We ask ourselves in what ways we allow fear
to dominate us and enslave us?

We talk to God about it in our prayer. We ask God for guidance.

We talk to God about our attitude and treatment of people
at our work place, in our school, in our club.

DISCERNMENT & VULNERABILITY

We have a name for the ways
of asking ourselves and God about our direction.

We call it '*discernment*'.

In our discerning, we also identify and name our *vulnerabilities* and how these vulnerabilities came to be part of our lives, and how they continue to influence us.

WHY DID THE FARMER THINK THAT HE COULD CONTROL EVERYTHING?
AND WHY DID HE THINK ONLY OF HIMSELF?
WHAT WOULD BE HIS VULNERABILITIES?

The spiritual writer Fr Brian Gallagher has said:

‘Whatever our individual, unique stories are, the simple fact is that we’ve all had to cope with a less than perfect world, a world that has ‘wounded’ us in some way. Especially when our wounds occur at a young age, it seems that, more often than not, they are repressed (understandably, in a young person), and so become a point of vulnerability, a ‘weak spot’ in our make-up. Though we are most likely unaware of this vulnerability, it will show itself in behaviour, especially in patterns of our behavior. Most people detect the behavioural patterns first. Examples abound: neediness in relationships, sensitivity to criticism, feelings of rejection in situations where it seems I’m not needed; self-pity, self-aggrandisement, withdrawal when confronted by authority figures.’

(‘Taking God to Heart. A Living Spirituality by Brian Gallagher MSC. St Pauls Publications 2008 Page 44)

We bring this realisation to prayer, and we ask God to guide us in our response. We might seek assistance from a spiritual director.

We need God to show us the way. We need God to help us review what we are doing, so that we can learn. It comes back to *praying through* this, not just praying now and again.

PLENARY 2020 & DISCERNMENT GUIDE

The planning for the national Plenary Council has made a [video resource](#) available on discernment, as individuals, as groups, as church. It is also found on the Plenary Council [website](#)

We ask God about ourselves, who we really are, and why we include some people and why we exclude others.

We ask God about our individual fears and our group fears, about our patterns of behavior and our preferences.

We talk to God about our prejudices
and how not to be slaves to our prejudices.

We talk to God about our anxieties and how to be truly free.

We talk to God about our world and how we can help to make a difference.

As we grow in our trust of God,
we are more open to using the gifts of the Holy Spirit
in all aspects of our lives.

Let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[\[http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/080419.cfm\]](http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/080419.cfm)

