

Wisdom 18:6-9 Ps 32; Heb 11:1-2. 8-19; Luke 12:32-48

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy'.

You hear that reading and you say in your mind, 'Well priest, take this reading and make it something digestible. Tell me, as I have been told before, that Jesus does not really mean sell 'everything'. Not 'Everything'. You see, I understand the point, but I know what happens if I get to enthused. If I sell everything and give it to the poor then I become poor, and I become a burden on someone else, a problem for my family and for society, living on benefits and for what good? Who here had done this? Who here will do this? Not you priest, and not me. And who here does not have a really good, and reasonable and valid reason for not doing such a brainless thing? Wife, children, mortgage, independence, food and warmth. I admire St Clare, I admire St Ignatius and St Francis. But they are stories on the priest's lips, or statues or glass images: not quite real flesh and blood enough to say fare-well to the necessary sustenance of my life.

Maybe Jesus did not quite mean this. Perhaps I do not have to step off the cliff edge. I want to step back so that I do not suffer a nauseous attack of spiritual vertigo and still enjoy a view of the path that Jesus offer, but...

Listen to some more of the Jesus's words. '*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be.*' Then Jesus speaks in parables: '*Be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him when he comes and knocks.*' This means that

we are called to be attentive servants. There is not shame in obeying God, But there is a lot of shame in not obeying Him. The parable continues, but transitions. The word 'master' is for is next not applied to God, but to 'everyman' to you and I. '*If the master of the house had known at what house the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into.*' You are the master of the house which you must guard and keep safe from the violence of the thief. If you do not, then the thief will take all that you have, and if you are pre-occupied then he will take up residence, like a squatter. Who is the housebreaker? Maybe it is just the world that diverts you away from God: an idea, a person or a thing that takes over your life. But maybe it is something much more malevolent whom you really do not want to come face to face with.

Well, what can you be preoccupied with? Your wealth, your family, your reputation, your employment, the contents of your refrigerator and bookshelf and music library. Even own your own heartache, mortgage, failures and poor health. It is true. I can be as fixated on sorrow as much as with diversion and work. But if you are consumed with hoarding or counting out your treasury of wealth or injury, you will not be roused by the sound of either the house-breaker or of Jesus. You will, for all intents and purposes be absent, even if you are a hermit. The difference is that the house-breaker will enter and make merry and Jesus will simply not come in at all.

Before I went away I read today's Gospel, and I realised that this morning (yesterday) would be the Feast of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross: Edith Stein. You may know that she has a special, close proximity to my heart,

being a saint of daily invocation in my prayers. I won't give you much detail, just a few lines. For more you may go away and read. You can do that.

Edith Stein was born into a devout Jewish family. She grew to be a renowned philosopher and something of a feminist icon. She also became an atheist. Through friendship and seeming chance, she read the diary of St Teresa of Avila and the Catholic Catechism. She believed and was baptised, first continuing to teach and then becoming a Carmelite nun. Her conversion re-rooted her with her Jewish upbringing, and in 1942, with the words 'I must go to my people' she was swept away from the world in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

It is there, at the death camp railway siding, that I have seen her for the past two weeks, not in the imagined reality of the smell and stench of the railway cattle cart; not be-smattered by the tears, agony and fear of those who would die with her immediately in the gas chambers or more slowly in the sadistic camps, but as a single figure, standing alone on the platform. No guards. No fellow prisoners, No noise. Just Edith Stein dressed in a dark hat, a smart jacket and skirt, and black shoes, maybe a throw back to her life as a university professor. Her hands were clasped in front of her, her head bowed slightly almost as if she was in the attitude of prayer. I knew it was her. I knew why she was there. When the Master knocked, Edith had opened the door and let Jesus into the dwelling she had kept for him.

See you can relax and breathe easy. This priest has not told you to *really* sell all your possessions and give to the needy. It seems that Jesus is asking for much more than merely this. Do that instead.