

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, September 29, 2024
26th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle B

Madonna's signature song "***Material Girl***" put her on the map in 1984.

The song tells the story of a woman whose main goal is to get rich, to have the best things, and to manipulate others to get them. While we might not go as far as this "*Material Girl*," many of us fall into the trap of thinking that a little more money or a few more possessions would not hurt. We convince ourselves that a bit of wealth would add to our dignity, provide more security for our families, and even allow us to help others.

But today's readings, especially from St. James, show us a different side of wealth – one that challenges our assumptions. St. James delivers a powerful rebuke:

"Weep and wail over your impending miseries. Your wealth has rotted away..."

He condemns those who hoard wealth, exploit the poor, and live in luxury at the expense of others. His words force us to reflect: Is it possible that our pursuit of wealth, no matter how innocent it seems, might be leading us away from God?

James is not condemning all wealth, nor is he criticizing all rich people. Rather, he is calling out those who make wealth their supreme value – those

who live only for material gain, who put their possessions above everything else. James is not attacking the acquisition of wealth. He is criticizing some of the ways it is acquired: like withholding a living wage from our workers, or not sharing the profits justly or equitably.

Let us be honest: **We all know that wealth, if used well, can be a blessing.**

But the question is, where do our priorities lie? St. James challenges us to consider whether we value material wealth more than spiritual riches. What do we spend our time and energy on? Do we dedicate ourselves to earning a living, accumulating wealth and possessions, and worrying about our finances and security? Or do we invest in our relationship with God, spending time in prayer, nourishing our souls, and helping our families and friends grow in faith?

We live in a world that constantly tells us that more is better – that the more we have, the happier we will be. But St. James reminds us that this pursuit of material wealth often leaves us spiritually bankrupt. When we focus on wealth alone, we forget what really matters: faith, family, and relationships.

psychologists say that *misers* – people who hoard their wealth – often suffer from low self-esteem and insecurity. They surround themselves with material possessions to compensate for their inner emptiness. Well, if we are honest with ourselves, there is a little bit of the ‘miser’ in each of us. We all have moments when we seek happiness and security in material things instead of

trusting in God's providence. We buy things we do not need to feel better about ourselves. But these things, as James reminds us, will eventually rot away. So, what is the proper measure of wealth according to the Gospel? The answer is simple: wealth that is shared, not hoarded.

The Lord Jesus and the Apostle James never recommended the elimination or destruction of wealth, but rather its distribution among the poor. The material blessings we receive are meant to be shared with those in need, especially the poor and vulnerable. Wealth can be a wonderful thing, but only if it is used to serve others and build up the kingdom of God. Someone once said, "The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it." The same can be said of money: The greatest use of wealth is to invest it in something eternal.

When we use our resources to help the poor, support our families, and spread the Gospel, we are making an investment that will bear fruit in eternity. In other words, wealth has eternal value only when used to serve God's purposes.

Let us leave this Mass today with a renewed commitment to generosity, using our wealth not for selfish gain but to serve others and glorify God. May our lives be a visible sign of the sharing that we are called to do as followers of Christ. Wealth, when shared, becomes a blessing for both the giver and the receiver, and through it, we help build the kingdom of God.