

## Homily 18th Sunday Ordinary Time 2022

I think you already know of my love of poetry and English Literature. One of my favourite stories is Charles Dickens', Scrooge.

Dickens describes Scrooge as "a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster." Despite having considerable personal wealth, he underpays his clerk Bob Cratchit and hounds his debtors relentlessly while living cheaply and joylessly in the chambers of his deceased business partner, Jacob Marley. When two men approach him on Christmas Eve for a donation to charity, he sneers at them refusing to give them a penny.

That night, Scrooge is visited by Marley's ghost. Marley tells Scrooge that he will be visited by three spirits hoping that he will mend his ways. The Ghost of Christmas Past, shows Scrooge visions of his early very unloved and unhappy life at boarding school. The Ghost of Christmas Present arrives next, showing Scrooge how his greed and selfishness have hurt others, particularly Cratchit, who cannot afford to provide his desperately ill son Tiny Tim with medical treatment because of Scrooge's miserliness. Finally, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge where his greed and selfishness will lead: a lonely death and an overgrown grave and the Cratchit family devastated by the loss of Tiny Tim. Scrooge asks this spirit if this future can still be changed, but the spirit does not reply. Scrooge then begs this spirit for another chance, promising to change his ways – and wakes up in his bed on Christmas Day. Overjoyed, Scrooge commits to being more generous and compassionate; he accepts his nephew's invitation to Christmas dinner, provides for Cratchit and his family, and donates to the charity fund. In the end, he becomes known as the embodiment of the Christmas spirit and as a "second father" to Tiny Tim.

All three of today's readings, like the tale of Ebenezer Scrooge, warn us of the dangers of selfishness, the storing up personal wealth and a sole reliance on things of this passing world. In Ecclesiastes the Wisdom Writer exclaims: 'Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity' and counsels us that one day all our labours, restless nights and increasing bank balances will come to nothing. St Paul in his Letter to The Colossians goes even further and urges us to 'kill all in you that belongs to our earthly life' and exhorts us to turn away from 'greed, impurity, guilty passions, evil desires.' And, like Scrooge, become a new creation in the 'image of your creator.' St Luke, in today's Gospel, sees Jesus repeat the warning of Ecclesiastes 'to guard against any kind of avarice,' and to avoid storing up more than you need. Jesus then tells the parable of the rich man who, not satisfied with his enormous wealth, decides to pull down his existing barns to build even bigger ones and sit back and enjoy the fruits of his labours. 'Fool!', says Jesus, 'this very night demand will be made of your soul.' This parable illustrates and endorses the teaching of Jesus in another section of The Gospel: 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.'

No don't rush home and donate all your savings, leaving yourself destitute and racked with worry, for that too, would be foolhardy. We are hardly, " squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinners! Hard and sharp as flint, secret, and self-contained, and solitary as oysters." However, all of us should make sure that our priority in life is to love God with all our hearts, with all our minds and with all our souls and to love of our neighbour as ourselves. We should be aware of the temptation to use money and possessions as symbols of our worldly success, a way of stating or even boasting, 'Look what I've achieved in life!'. Thirdly, if we can afford it, we must give as generously as possible to those in most need, as they are truly our sisters and brothers in Christ. Finally, smugness about our perceived comfortable status in life must be curbed as we never know the 'hour or the minute' that God will make demand of our souls....and then what good will our money and possessions be.

Scrooge learned the lesson 'There are no pockets in a shroud.' just in time. It made him a joyful, peace filled and happy new creature with his priorities in the correct order. I hope I learn my lesson in time.