

Peace is... placing God first

*Colossians 3:1,5 "seek what is above...not of what is on earth...
put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly..."*

*Luke 12:15 Jesus said to the crowd, "Take care to guard against all greed,
for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."*

Reflection: Putting things in order

We easily fall into the trap of equating "success" with the amount and kind of possessions we have. Are we storing up earthly treasures or heavenly treasures? The rich man in the parable is hoarding what he has, so that he can rest and enjoy it for many years. He is trusting in what he has, rather than in God. God asks him, "to whom will they belong?", because "this night your life is demanded of you."

If we lose our life this day, it will not matter how many possessions we have. What matters is our stewardship. How are we using or sharing the gifts God has given us? **Everything we have is gift!** Let us not get caught up in consumerism, lest it take over and cause us great toil and anxiety in trying to keep up with it! Let us take stock of our priorities, and root out all forms of greed and selfishness. What are we focused on during the day? "Women and men who seek to live as [Christian] stewards learn that, 'all things work for good for those who love God.'" (Romans 8:28)¹

Placing God first

Are we happy with ourselves as God made us? Do we compare ourselves or our lives with others?

How do we handle the disappointments or unexpected setbacks we face? Do we fall back on God?

There is a necessary balance in our lives. When we are grateful for who we are and what we have, we can be content with our life. When we place God first: entrusting everything to Him; giving Him our thanks and praise; offering all we do for Him; using His gifts wisely...then we will have the peace that only He can provide. We begin with prayer and the desire to cooperate with His will.

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Action:

- *Read and reflect on the Stewardship Prayer we recite at Mass. Are we truly using our gifts wisely and sharing them unselfishly?*
- *Reflect honestly on your needs vs. your wants. Look at how you spend your money. If you need to cut back on expenses, or have already done so, what is getting cut? Are you trying to keep up with the lifestyle to which you are accustomed, with a lower income or with higher expenses, or both? Are you building credit card debt which can be avoided by doing without certain "wants?"*
- *Look at the financial situation of those less fortunate than you. How are you helping to provide for them?*
- *Look at the financial situation of our parishes. How are we providing for the physical needs of our*

Church? We are all members of the body of Christ. Do we take ownership of our parish community? All of us, including the Church, face rising expenses. Yet some of us are still putting the same amount in the collection basket that we have been for the past 20 years! We see the collections diminish as time passes. Is the Church one of our expenses that we are cutting back on? We may need to dig deep, but each of us needs to take responsibility for keeping our parishes alive and thriving.

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<http://www.sjbcatholicparish.org/peace-justice.php>

¹ U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults. USCCB, Washington, D.C., 2006, p.454