

Sunday July 31, 2022  
18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

## **Parishioner Reflection**

*By: Mary Bastedo*

“What is my life really about anyway?” Summer can lead me to reflect on that question, as I contemplate the beauty of nature while sitting beside a lake or in my backyard or on a balcony, or as I enjoy time with family and friends. “What is important in my life? What do I value? What makes me happy” Jesus says in today’s Gospel what’s important is that we be “rich toward God.”

What does that mean? Being rich toward God suggests being generous towards God, ready to offer my gifts to be shared with others. It implies being grateful to God, aware that everything I am and possess is His gift. Being rich toward God implies trust in Him, openness to His desire and a willingness to risk. That kind of trust involves deep listening, being attentive to God’s voice and responsive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in my daily life. Being rich toward God is about seeking the things that are above, as Saint Paul so eloquently says in his letter to the Colossians. “Set your minds on things that are above....your life is hidden in Christ.”

What can we do to develop that richness toward God? A favourite analogy of Jesus is the one about the sower scattering seed on the soil. It’s the rich soil that is best able to receive the Word of God, the soil that has been cleared of rocks and weeds and is well cultivated, fertilized and watered. So, too, we can be intentional about clearing away the rocks and weeds that impede and choke out God’s life within us. We can pay attention to the condition of our soil, cultivating it, adding fertilizer at the right time and watering it daily. Saint Paul says, “Put to death whatever is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.” Those can be the boulders that completely prevent the life of God from abiding in me. The persistent desire for those things can be like weeds, continually popping up in my garden, threatening to choke out my efforts to be good.

We may need help with this. Friends of mine have been eking out a farming existence on land near Bancroft for 40 years, gradually clearing land which is very rocky. In the initial stage they hire a bulldozer to clear out the rocks. Then they use horses to till the land and every year they add fertilizer to get a decent crop of hay or oats. They have learned what

their particular soil requires and now their farm is very fruitful. When I visited them this summer I came away with fresh garden vegetables, eggs, maple syrup and homemade jam. They are rich towards God - and others. What can I learn from them? In my life, the bulldozer may be going to confession or choosing to speak to a counsellor to help sort out what's blocking me. The horses that till the land may be people I reach out to, asking for help. The fertilizer could be a time of retreat and the water daily times of prayer or spiritual reading.

As my heart becomes richer toward God, I'm able to loosen my grip on the possessions that I think define me, things I am holding on to for security. I realize more and more that it is God's love that defines me and my security is in Him alone. Jesus' words in today's Gospel are a warning, a caution: "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." May these days of summer help us to realize that what's most important in our lives is our relationship with God and may we have the grace to let go of anything that prevents us from growing in being rich toward God.