

Reflection for Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time by Ewelina Frackowiak  
Ecclesiastes 1.2; 2.21-23, Colossians 3.1-5, 9-11, Luke 12.13-21

Has anything ever been stolen from you? A wallet, a coat, a car perhaps? How did you feel when that happened? It was painful, wasn't it? I remember once, when I lived in New York, I had this wonderful, hippie coat and a hat that looked exactly like the one I admired on pictures of Lenin that decorated my primary school back in Poland. I looked awesome in the hat and the coat - and they were stolen. I was so upset and angry... If I met Jesus then in New York, of course I would ask: Jesus, make these people who took my coat give it back!!

We do not have the opportunity to get answers directly from Jesus and learn from them, but we have the ability to learn from our experiences – experience is like the soil needed for the seeds of our wisdom to grow. When you think of the time when you lost something valuable, something you cherished, it probably felt like your anger and sadness would last forever, am I right? You could not see beyond it. But you moved on and then maybe one day you realized you do not need the thing at all. Life moved on.

Your life does not consist of your possession. Neither does it consist of your career, reputation, social status nor education. Let's not get attached to them. You, me, everybody, will die. Even if this was the most peaceful world with no terrorism and no violence, no threat from humans and nature, death would still remain part of our lives.

These lives we were given are precious. We can spend our time and energy worrying about gaining money, power, reputation, knowledge, we can spend them on proving to someone, to ourselves that we are good and worthy, but that will be a waste of our lives, frankly. If you do not believe, juxtapose these worries with the vision of your death – would you be regretting in the moment of your death that you didn't convince someone that you were good? That you did not collect enough money?

What's the alternative? What does it mean to be rich in what matters to God as Jesus advised in today's Gospel?

First of all we need to drop the illusions that preclude us from living fully. Drop the illusion that you need that coat or the hat to be yourself even before they are stolen or worn out. Drop the illusion that your wealth, your reputation defines you. I do not mean we should not enjoy our possession, our jobs. But we should not get attached to them. We can be grateful for what we have and be grateful when that is taken away.

If we do not treat material things, social status, reputation as treasure that has to be obtained, into what then shall we put our hearts, our efforts? My answer is into practicing compassion. Only by practicing compassion, we will be able to understand the mysterious “Christ is all and in all” message, we will be able to live as if Christ is all and in all. Christ understood as the embodiment of all the compassion that dwells in the world, compassion which we want to awake. Not only in Christians of course, in all the world. The Tibetan monk, Tokmé Zongpo, wrote “Every being has cared for you as your mother. If they all suffer for time without end, how can you be happy?”<sup>1</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer advised that when we think about somebody else’s shortcomings we should think they are our own<sup>2</sup>. We can also rejoice in somebody else’s virtues as if they were our own. We are one in God.

Let’s enjoy and reflect upon that. This is a good time and place for it - we are gathered together for sharing and for Eucharist.

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<sup>1</sup> McLeod, Ken. 2014. *Reflections on Silver River. Tokmé Zongpo’s Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*. Unfettered Mind Media. Sonoma, p.19

<sup>2</sup> “Whatever folly men commit, be their shortcomings or their vices what they may, let us exercise forbearance; remembering that when these faults appear in others, it is our follies and vices that we behold. They are the shortcomings of humanity, to which we belong; whose faults, one and all, we share; (...)” Schopenhauer, Arthur. On the Sufferings of the World. In: *The Selected Works of Arthur Schopenhauer*. Library of Alexandria, GoogleBook.