

## HOMILY FOR SUNDAY, AUGUST 5th, 2007

### Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time

#### Introduction

As I sat down on Friday evening to think about today's scripture readings and this homily, I place the date at the top of my notes and saw that it is August 5. 62 years ago tomorrow the United States dropped a nuclear bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. And incredibly, three days later we did it again, this time against Nagasaki.

#### I

For decades many of us in this country excused those crimes against humanity as having saved thousands of American lives - and Japanese lives too - by shortening the war. However, some 140,000 people, mostly civilians, were killed in those two attacks and how many more had their lives ruined because of the fallout and lasting effects of radiation from those bombs.

In excusing those crimes we did what Jesus severely criticizes in today's Gospel. We allowed our own security considerations to win out over those things "which matter to God" (Luke 12:21) - all human life.

(By way of parenthesis, I notice that two Democratic candidates for the presidency openly debated this past week the feasibility of using nuclear weapons on terrorists. This is ominous and something to watch carefully and decry.)

#### II

Another line from the Gospel arrested my attention as well: "the things you have prepared, to whom shall they go"(Luke 12:20). In other words - all this security you/we are trying so hard to achieve today in our society, what will it amount to in the end?

#### III

This past week I read an article by a medical doctor in which he reported that older people (and some not so old) often ask him: "Doctor, what must I do to live a long life?". He said that he answers that they must exercise, avoid overweight, take their anti-hypertensive meds., pay careful attention to their blood glucose, make sure their LDL is low and their HDL is high and to have a colonoscopy once in a while. The people generally tell him that they have done all these things for years.

They the doctor wrote that he is always tempted to say at that point: "There is one more thing you must do. You must give up what you have and follow the Lord".

He went on to give a kind of blueprint for what a truly good older age would be:

- one that would maximize our openness to change and adaptability, both psychologically, socially and spiritually.

- it would recognize the opportunities that exist in ageing which could lead us to look more carefully at some of the dynamics of God's action - for example, a deepened experience of God's love and call, of being loved by God; moving from an isolated and stubborn clinging to independence to acceptance of new living situations that might be more dependent; a differing sense of limitations, of diminishment and fear of death; the chance to experience the reality of God's grace and life in the light of Jesus' Resurrection;

- and freedom from what keep us from deep relationship with God, open to finding God in all things.

Interesting meditation from a faith-filled medical person.

#### IV

None of this is meant to diminish the value of security. We all seek it and rightly so. It is immensely important for human beings.

However, the question is what kind of security:

- the security of nuclear weapons stockpiled someplace in our country?

- the security of closing our borders against immigrant populations which, like our own forebears can bring a vigor and freshness to our society?

- the security of a medicine bottle?

Or should we not seek the security outlined by the doctor I have been quoting?

## Conclusion

Let me close by reminding us of a wonderful song from "The Sound of Music". You will all remember the lines that go "A bell is not a bell 'till you ring it. A song is not a song 'till you sing it." And I believe likewise that "Security is not security 'till you give it away".