

## **Homily for 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

The author, Jack Finney, wrote a short story entitled, “Contents of a Dead Man’s Pocket.” It tells the story of a man named Tom who spends months working on a project for his business. He summarizes all his work on a piece of yellow paper. He knows that if he can solve this single problem, he will be promoted and his career will really take off.

One night, Tom stays home rather than go to the movies with his wife Clare. He wants to write up his proposal. An unexpected blast of cold air from the hallway blows the piece of yellow paper out a window where it becomes lodged on the ledge just beyond Tom’s reach – eleven stories above the street below.

Desperation trumps common sense when Tom convinces himself that he can retrieve the paper. Carefully he makes his way onto the ledge. Slowly shuffling along the bricks, he manages to grab the yellow paper and stuff it in his jacket pocket. He shuffles back to the window, struggling to keep his balance. But the old window has slipped closed behind him and he can’t pry it open. He doesn’t dare try to break the glass pane – reaching back to swing at the window will send him falling backwards.

The story leaves us watching Tom trapped eleven stories above Lexington Ave., on a cold New York night. His calls for help are ignored and it will be hours before Clare would be home. Contemplating his death, Tom is filled with fear and anger as he realizes all they would find in his pockets would be a piece of yellow paper. His ambition, the time he should have spent with his wife, his own greed, haunt him as he realizes his life has been such a waste.

Our lives are a series of days. Some are special while most are quite routine. Some days are holy and set apart; most of them are ordinary. We have days that recall momentous historical events. Mostly we have days filled with the tasks we choose for ourselves.

The liturgy today invites us to consider the day before which all other days pale. The prophet Malachi, the apostle Paul and Jesus in the Gospel all refer to this as the “Day of the Lord.” They refer to that time, as individuals and as a group, when we will be asked to give an account of our lives.

This Day of the Lord is not presented to us so that we might live in fear. Rather, it is presented to us so that we might consider how we live our lives now. Are we like the people in the Gospel who contemplate the treasures of the temple and overlook or pay little attention to what are the true treasures of our lives? What will be the contents of our pockets when

we die? Will it be our business cards, a list of our acquisitions, a sample of our workout routines? Or will it be the remnants of a life lived day by day with caring for others, concern for those in need and a profound desire to walk humbly with God knowing that without God our lives are quite meaningless?