



Immaculate Conception
Church

Homily for the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A 2014

One of my favorite stories is entitled, "Contents of a Dead Man's Pocket." It's 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 backward.

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

Our lives are a series of days. Some of those days are special; most are quite ordinary. Some days are set apart because of a holiday or a special event; most of them are just routine. In the end many of our days are of our own making when we decide what to do and when to do it.

The liturgy today invites us to consider the day before which all other days pale. St. Paul calls it the "day of the Lord." Paul is referring to that time, as individuals and as a group, when we will be asked to give an account of our lives. The Gospel tells us that this "day of the Lord" is when we will have to give an account of our lives and explain what we did with what God gave us.

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. Do we bury our talents and our time like the steward in the Gospel? Do we think about all the wonderful things we could do but yet never take the time to do them?

What will the contents of our pockets be 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 by loving our family and friends and caring for those in need? The choice is ours to make.