

**Reflection on the Gospel-18th Sunday in Ordinary Time C
(Luke 12:13-21)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Every faithful Jew and every faithful Christian knows that “the earth belongs to God and all that is in it” (Psalm 24). That does not stop people from arguing over possessions and even killing for them. It never has. There seems to be something deep within the human psyche that continually seeks for more. Those who seek to be “rich toward God” or “rich in God” find life. Those who seek to be rich in material possessions will simply be left, at life’s end, with a question: “To whom will this hoard belong?” The question is rhetorical and expects the answer of Psalm 24: “the earth and all that is in it belongs to God”.

Jesus is addressed as “teacher”, and is asked to force a decision in an inheritance debate. He demonstrates that he is “teacher” rather than “divider”. He tells a hard hitting story. He knows that story-telling is more effective in bringing people to life-giving decisions than is any attempt to bring down a definitive ruling, especially for those who surely know the law. His story is about a landowner who is blessed by an abundant harvest. The estate manager or steward as well as the peasant workers and their families might reasonably expect a share in the profits, even perhaps a remission of the debts they inevitably carry. In this instance, the blessing of abundance turns the land-owner in upon himself rather than out towards others and so “toward God”. First person singular pronouns predominate: “What am *I* to do? *I* have no place....*I* will do this....*I* will *I* will *I* will” The futility or senselessness of stockpiling for personal gain is highlighted by the shift to second person singular, “*You* fool...”, and by the divine judgment on the landowner’s self-focus and greed. Greed appears in today’s second reading from the letter to the people of Colossae. For the author of that letter, greed is simply idolatry, worship of a false god.

In these times of planetary vulnerability, there is some urgency about the call to place our trust in the goodness of a generous God, to reduce our ecological footprint, and to acknowledge by the way we live that the good things of the earth belong to God and to all of God’s people, not just to the privileged few. In consistently refusing to “store up treasure” for our own selfish ends, we become forever “rich toward God”.