

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C

Wisdom 18:6-9

Psalms 33:1, 12, 18-19, 20-22

Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19

Luke 12:32-48

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Imagine a student at a medium-sized Catholic university somewhere in the Pacific Northwest who, after living in a student residence hall for three years, decides to spend his senior year off-campus. When he has found a suitable apartment, his mother flies into town to help him move in. She is determined that everything about the apartment should be perfect. She finds comfortable furniture, equips the kitchen, and with infinite care, attends to the details of decoration. Finally, having filled the cupboards and refrigerator with good food, his favorite snacks, and even a case of beer, she kisses her son goodbye and leaves him to his studies.

Our student is delighted with his new place. Unfortunately, he has always been something of a slob, and after a few weeks the apartment is unrecognizable. Soiled laundry is draped over the furniture. Every surface is covered with dirty dishes, discarded pizza boxes and empty beer cans. The air smells of stale cigar smoke. The kitchen floor, which used to be beige, is now brown. The healthy food is rotting in the refrigerator.

One morning, while he is searching the apartment for two socks that match, his mother rings to say she is coming the next week for a visit. While he is on the phone with her, our student notices as if for the first time, the devastation around him. Embarrassed and conscience-stricken, he resolves to put things right before she arrives. By dint of

titanic effort, he manages in the course of a few days to restore the apartment to its original condition. Now his mother rings again, her voice filled with disappointment. Something has come up at home and she won't be able to visit as planned, but he's not to feel bad. The visit isn't cancelled, only postponed. She can't say exactly when, but she is determined to visit soon.

Now our student has a problem. How can he return to his customary squalor when he has no idea when his mother will appear? He wouldn't put it past her to just arrive smiling on his doorstep one day without warning. In the end, he is driven to the desperate expedient of changing his lifestyle. He will have to keep the apartment in order until she comes. He undertakes a new regimen of regularly washing dishes, doing laundry, and even occasionally mopping the kitchen floor. In coming days and weeks he is surprised to discover that he likes living in a clean well-ordered place. In the end, he is a slob no more.

Our Gospel is intended to spur an analogous change in us. We are servants who know that our master will return, but we don't know when. In order to be ready when he comes, we need to be good stewards of God's Creation. We need to overcome the temptation to live lives of dissipation, living just, well-ordered lives instead. Then, in the course of preparing a world worthy of Christ's return, we may be surprised to discover that we have made a world worth our living in.