

Homily based on the readings from January 31, 2026 (2 Samuel 12.1-7a, 10-17; Mark 4.35-41)

It is an unfortunate reality that *wealth* does not typically lead to *generosity*. From a rational perspective, one might assume that financial security would make people more likely to share their resources – but regrettably that is rarely the case. Although there are some noteworthy exceptions, the more possessions a person has, the more he generally *cares* about his possessions – to the detriment of the people he is supposed to be helping.

The same phenomenon occurs with respect to our Christian faith. In principle, people who have received more substantial gifts ought to be more *grateful* to *giver* of all gifts – but again that is sadly uncommon. To be honest, this situation is the root of *most* of the problems afflicting Catholicism in this country. Think about the countless immigrants who journeyed from Italy or Ireland or Poland – or from Peru or Mexico or the Philippines. From a material perspective, many of these individuals

arrived with nothing more than the clothes on their backs – but they also brought a deep and abiding faith. With each successive generation, though, two changes have occurred: families have become more prosperous and they have also become less connected to their faith. One of these outcomes does not always imply the other, but there is obviously a correlation. I cannot tell you how many funerals I have served at, where the deceased – either a first- or second-generation American – was a bulwark of the faith, but his middle-class children and grandchildren clearly had not seen the inside of a church in decades. This is a sad state of affairs, but it is one we cannot afford to ignore.

I am not sure whether this observation comes as any comfort, but the corrosive power of material success is not a recent development. To the contrary, it has been evident throughout human history – as we can see from today's first reading. After years of hardship and struggle, King David finally possessed everything he could have *possibly* desired. He was the unchallenged ruler of the entire Kingdom of Israel and Judah. He lived in a lavish palace, with a host of servants catering to his every

need. He had obtained the absolute loyalty and adulation of his subjects. In every respect, David had received the fullness of God's favor. Yet the *moment* he discovered something *else* he longed for – in this case, the beautiful wife of one his most faithful soldiers – he did not hesitate to take it, eventually resorting to murder to conceal his dishonor. The more he had, the more he wanted – and what he wanted overwhelmed his sense of right and wrong, and ultimately fractured his relationship with the Lord himself.

The silver lining here is that, no matter how far a person falls, God is always willing to lift him back up. After paying the price for his misdeeds, David still had the opportunity to repent of his sins. In fact, the Fifty-First Psalm – part of which we heard this morning – was composed as a public confession for these very offenses. Nevertheless, separating ourselves from God *always* has lasting consequences – to ourselves and to the people we love. It is *essential* to remember that prosperity and power are *worthless* in and of themselves – that their *only* value is to help the people around us, and thereby to bring us closer to

the Lord. Our immigrant ancestors – who braved the windswept oceans to give their children a better life – were *acutely* aware of this fact. We must never allow ourselves, in our comfort and our complacency, to forget it.