

**April 23, 2017 Our Inheritance Homily:** Brothers and sisters, in the year 1936 the American filmmaker, Frank Capra, directed one of his finest motion pictures, "*Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*". The vastly entertaining story is set in the era of the Great depression. Longfellow Deeds, (played splendidly by the actor Gary Cooper) is a simple mid-westerner whose interests are writing poems for greeting cards and playing the tuba. Unexpectedly and suddenly he receives a twenty million dollar inheritance from his late uncle's estate. Wealth turns his life upside down. Mr. Capra wishes the moviegoer to know that money can often change a man's way of life and even change his personality, oftentimes for the worst.

One is reminded of the unforgettable biblical story of the prodigal son, who, in the Lord's parable, demands the share of his inheritance from his father, and quickly exhausts all his funds on riotous living. The massive wealth slipped through his fingers! But Mr. Deeds remains true to himself and, in the end, gives his wealth away to destitute farmers who have foreclosed on their farms during the darkest days of the depression.

According to reputable scholars, the First letter of Peter was initially addressed to recently baptized Christians who enjoyed their new life in the Risen Christ. In addition, the author exhorts his fellow Christians to persevere in the faith in the face of all trials and tribulations. In this edifying epistle, (I Peter 1:3-9) there is mention of "an imperishable inheritance" to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Recall the triumphant words: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you...."

In the Old Testament, the so-called "promised land", the land of Canaan, became the inheritance of Israel. The Christian inheritance is not earthly, and therefore imperishable; it is heavenly. It cannot be ravaged by war, defiled by enemies, or faded by time. It is "guarded by God's power" (I Peter 1:5). "The security of the Christian inheritance", writes biblical scholar Joseph Fitzmyer, S. J., "is like that of a land with strong military protection. It is the very power of God, which raised up Jesus and endowed him with the glory that brings this security".

When our earthly pilgrimage comes to an end, we will stand tall and claim the inheritance promised to us on the day of our baptism, an inheritance nothing less than Our Lord Himself. It is simply one more reason why this is a season of joy and hope.

As a man of faith, Longfellow Deeds recognized that there is an inheritance more valuable than an estate bequeathed to a relative. The one "kept in heaven" is the greatest prize of all.

Amen!