

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time – October 14, 2018

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

First Reading: WIS 7:7-11

I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.
I preferred her to scepter and throne, and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her, nor did I liken any priceless gem to her; because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand, and before her, silver is to be accounted mire.
Beyond health and comeliness I loved her, and I chose to have her rather than the light, because the splendor of her never yields to sleep.
Yet all good things together came to me in her company, and countless riches at her hands.

Responsorial Psalm: PS 90:12-13, 14-15, 16-17

R. (14) Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart. Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants!

R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!

Fill us at daybreak with your kindness, that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.

Make us glad, for the days when you afflicted us, for the years when we saw evil.

R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!

Let your work be seen by your servants and your glory by their children; and may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours; prosper the work of our hands for us! Prosper the work of our hands!

R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!

Second Reading: HEB 4:12-13

Brothers and sisters:

Indeed the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart. No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

Gospel: MK 10:17-30

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother."

He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words.

So Jesus again said to them in reply, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, "Then who can be saved?"

Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God." Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you."

Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come."

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Someone has observed that if you put a penny close enough to your eye you can block out the sun. So it is with many good things in life including money and possessions. In and of themselves money and possessions are not bad or evil. In fact, God is the source of them as gifts to us; “for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all.” (1 Chronicles 29:11b,12a)

Man’s problem with possessions and riches comes from grasping them so close to our heart that they replace the Son as the center of our vision, the apple of our eye. I believe that the point of this week’s Gospel reading, is Jesus’ warning about “trusting in riches.” As long as we are in this world we still need to relate to possessions and money, but they should be a means of life, not an end. True peace and happiness is enhanced when we recognize that possessions and money are simply tools that enable us to live as God desires. They are a means not an end.

This leaves us with the question, “What should be the end or the goal of our existence?” Is it not the same issue with which Jesus confronts the rich young man? Namely, abandon anything in your life that is hindering your commitment, and come follow me. The rich young ruler did much for which he could be commended. Many would say he “had his heart in the right place.” Yet his response to Jesus’ challenge and invitation to sell all and come follow him, indicated a hesitancy to put the call of Christ ahead of his life of financial security.

Surprisingly it is often not just wealthy people who are beset by the problem of trusting in riches. Often, we who have little are equally preoccupied with concern about acquiring more money, and our preoccupation blocks out the reality of Jesus Christ and his call to righteous living. Actually, concern about acquiring more possessions and money is simply another way of saying we are trusting in them. Why are we concerned? Because deep in our heart we believe (trust) that they are the key to security, comfort, freedom, peace, and a host of other inner desires.

The Scriptures do not tell us how the rich young man ultimately responded, but only indicated the emotional turmoil the decision was obviously causing. As we grow in discipleship and commitment we often experience a similar initial sorrow as we decide to abandon some attachment we love, for Someone we choose to love more, Jesus. But it is a short sorrow, and as Jesus goes on to teach in this passage this brief sorrow is replaced by surpassing joy which is a hundredfold in comparison, and eternal in value.

“Maria Cristina of Savoy, the young, pretty, and cultivated queen of Naples, said...’Although I am healthy, rich, beautiful...What then? And I possess gold and silver...What then? Almost unique in wit and learning...What then? Even if I were to enjoy the world for a thousand years...What then? Soon we die and nothing remains: Serve your God and you will have everything then!’”*

This week’s first reading says, “Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me.” Today’s materialistic secular world is rampant with false advice and seductive entrapment to believe that the person who has the most toys wins. Having been bombarded by these messages it will be very difficult

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to change the way we relate to possessions and money. Perhaps the very first application we should make is to daily, consistently pray asking God for understanding and a spirit of wisdom similar to Maria Cristina of Savoy. Then we might realize that he who has the most toys really loses, and he who serves God, wins.

* Illustrissimi: Letters from Pope John Paul I, by Albino Luciani (page 127).

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

First Reading — Wisdom 7:7-11

1. How would you summarize the value of wisdom?

Second Reading — Hebrews 4:12-13

2. What does “the word of God is living and effective” mean to you?
3. Give an example of how God’s Word discerns our thought and intentions.

Gospel Reading — Mark 10:17-30

4. Where do you see yourself in this story?
5. How would you respond if Jesus issued the same invitation to you?
6. What are some warning signals that would warn us that we are in danger of trusting in money?
7. What motivations do you see for sacrificial living?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.