

## **October 14, 2018**

Wis 7:7-11; Heb 4:12-13; Mk 10:17-30 (17-27, Short)

### Mass Reflection:

What does it mean to participate in the Mass? Many years ago people went to “hear” Mass, that is they came to Mass to be spectators of the sacrifice going on, but did not really verbally engage except maybe to sing. After Vatican II there was an emphasis on the people having parts by which to respond and verbally participate in the Mass. However, what some of the people of older times did not realize, and many people in our own time do not realize, is that speaking is not the only way that we participate in Mass.

We don't come to Mass to be entertained (so that shouldn't be an expectation), however, participating well makes the Mass more meaningful to you, gives greater praise to God, and allows God to touch you. Here are some ways to participate: (1) Pray, don't just say, responses: Listen to what you are saying, speak from the heart, (2) Sing: Singing brings us bodily into participation in a special way. Humans use music so much because it touches something deep inside us. If you can't sing well, then just sing softly - but sing. (3) Listen attentively to the readings and homily, see what God is trying to say to you - even if it is a reading you've heard many times, search for the way it may speak to you today, (4) Focus on the words of the songs, the prayers the priest says on behalf of all, the Eucharistic prayer. Mentally pray along with them, and (5) Think about what you are going to offer at the Mass - we will speak more on this in another talk. The Mass is a wonderful act of worship, a place to offer to God the week that has passed, and a place that we can meet God and be strengthened for the coming week. Participating both physically, verbally, and mentally brings it more alive.

### Homily:

In the Gospel the rich young man asks Jesus “*what must I do to inherit everlasting life?*” He apparently had all that he could want in the world - he was rich - yet there was something missing. Did he think that everlasting life would be the crown jewel of his possessions? Perhaps he wanted everlasting life for the wrong reasons - seeing it as another cool thing to have, as a promise of eternal happiness and comfort - the best retirement plan ever! But Jesus is calling us to something more than just to go to heaven so we have a really awesome eternity, there is one thing more that will really complete us - himself. Jesus responds to the young man's question by asking if he follows the commandments. This is a basic requirement to stay connected to God, to avoid everlasting death in hell, and to be able to share in eternal life in heaven. The young man answers that he has kept these (so he must have thought he was all set, that's all he wanted to know - just follow the minimum rules and you get the prize). But Jesus says that he still lacks one thing, and then given him the prescription to sell all he has and give it to the poor. What was the thing the young man lacked? What could he possibly gain by getting rid of his rich lifestyle? How do you get anything by giving things away - it doesn't make sense!

But when Jesus says that he still lacks something, he was not speaking about something that he could go and pick up at the store, or put into a closet at his house. Jesus saw deep inside the young man and saw something lacking in his heart. We heard in the second reading: *The word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two edged sword ... and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.* Jesus saw this lack, and his words cut deep into the comfortable world of the young man. What that young man lacked in his heart was key to not only his present happiness, but his future happiness as well. Jesus assures him that if he gives away all the possessions, all the things that give him comfort and security in this life, then he will have treasure in heaven - treasure obtained due to the faith in God he will gain in the depths of the heart. In the end the young man chooses his possessions over the mysterious thing that Jesus is referring to; he chooses his possessions over uniting to God.

We hold to things in this world (money, relationships, material possession, our own ideologies and wills) - we get some sense of comfort and security from these things that makes us rely less and less on God. Jesus says it is difficult to get to heaven if you are rich, you may be saying “Whew! At least great wealth is not gonna get in my way!” But it is not just money that get in the way - we can be as attached to our careers, our friendships, our “stuff”, our being right - as we can be attached to a big balance in the bank or cars or houses. If we put these things above God in our hearts we begin the process of pushing God out of our heart.

Jesus calls us today in this Eucharist to lay down the things that we hold onto for security, and as we receive the Eucharist, to allow Him to occupy a special place in our heart. If we let go of some of the things that we give our heart to, we can have more to offer to God at the offertory, we have more time to give in service, we have more love and attention to give to those who need, and we have more energy to give back to God for all he has entrusted us with. Jesus is not asking us to take away our family’s means of legitimate support, or throw away reasonable possessions, but rather, to discover what things we have given a space in our hearts that we truly don’t need, or those that we are holding on to despite them causing us pain - and then to get rid of them and open a space for God who will fully satisfy and compete us one day in the everlasting security of heaven. There are many examples of people who have done this and found greater peace. The rich young man thought that possessions were the things he needed, and wanted to know what the minimum he had to do for God, if we try to give more than the minimum (of time, talent, and treasure) to God we could see great things take place.