

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B-2021)
St. Patrick – Milford

The Lord is always asking us to let go of many of his gifts in order to help us to recognize that the greatest gift of all is ... the Giver. He asked this choice of the apostles, to leave behind their boats and nets and great catch of fish, their tax tables with the money on it, their whole lives up until that moment — to what St. Peter said in today’s Gospel “everything,” and he meant “everything” — in order to follow the Lord Jesus and commit themselves entirely to collaborating with him in saving the world. He asked this choice of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, whom we honor this year, placing their lives fully in the service of God and his redemptive plan. He asked this choice of so many of the great saints, Augustine, Benedict, Francis, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, and Therese of Lisieux. The Lord asks us to give up a lot, sometimes everything, burning bridges and boats, and staking our whole life on what he is asking. And real wisdom involves seeing that as the greatest investment, the biggest no-brainer deal, we’ve ever been offered.

There’s a temptation for us to look at today’s episode of the Rich Young Man exclusively in terms of material possessions. When the Rich Young Man was confronted with the choice between his stuff like his jewelry, his gold and silver coins and Jesus ... and between continuing to call his own shots or following the Lord ... between the good life that he had and the great one to which Jesus was calling, the Rich Young Man chose the former. His face fell, St. Mark tells us today, and he went away sad and grieving, because he had many possessions and couldn’t let go of them in faith to follow Jesus. This is why Jesus told us quite clearly that we cannot serve both God and mammon. We have to make the choice for God over all the riches in the world. This is not easy! Remember, the whole conversation with Jesus and the rich young man began when he asked Jesus: what MORE must I do? And Jesus pulled no punches and told him. And the MORE that Jesus told him was TOO MUCH. The rich young man just did not expect the MORE to be EVERYTHING!

Let face it, all of us, at some point, are tempted to try to water God’s calling down, to blunt its immediacy, to soften its summons. The devil wants to tempt us in this path by trying to substitute a worldly wisdom for God’s, to convince us is that all God wants of us is to love him a little rather than to love him with all — 100 percent — of our mind, heart, soul and strength.

The devil wants to seduce us into thinking that if we give a buck to a homeless person everything is fine in our relationship with God when Jesus is calling us to love others as he has loved us, to sacrifice ourselves and all that he’s given us out of love for them just like Jesus never held anything back out of love for us.

That’s why we need God’s word. In today’s epistle, we read that the “word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword [the sharpest sword in the ancient world].” It has the ability to find the dividing point between soul and spirit, joints and marrow. To discern the reflections and thoughts not just of the mind but of the heart, what we really desire and love most.

Everything is naked and exposed before God. St James says that the word of God is like a mirror to help us to see who we really are ... so that we can then turn to God for the help only he can give to become whom he created us to be. The word of God both shocks and consoles us. It leads us to die to ourselves (in the way we must) in order for God to become truly and fully alive.

impose his will on us, he proposes his will to become slowly but surely our will. His heart speaks to our heart. We approach Jesus who is good, admit to him that we're not yet who we want to be, that we are not yet what He wants us to be, that we are not yet fulfilled in our relationship with him, and we ask him "What do I lack?" And he will help us to divest ourselves of our attachments ... to put 1st things 1st ... so that we can cling to him ... in love and trust.