

28th Sunday (B)

In the Gospel we see Our Lord's interaction with the Rich Young Man, as he's referred to since we do not know his name. Jesus' challenge to him is His same challenge for us.

This young man was following things externally. He was doing all the things that a good Jew did at the time. Prayed daily, participated in the pilgrim feasts, went to synagogue, tried to do what was good and avoid what was bad. But Jesus wanted him to go to the next level, to mature spiritually instead of remaining at that basic level that he was in and had mastered.

This man still viewed things in earthly terms. He hadn't begun to focus on Heaven. I think this is part of spiritual maturation, where the next life becomes more important than this one, when we begin actively preparing our souls for the next life. The sooner we start doing this the better. We should not wait until we are older, or close to death, or are diagnosed with some terminal illness. Tim McGraw said to live like you were dying. I think that touches upon Jesus' challenge for us today.

Jesus told him to give away all his possessions and follow Him. First off, Jesus did not say this to everyone He encountered in the Gospel. Not to everyone did He say, "Follow me." He saw potential in this person, and wanted to draw it out of him. Jesus was inviting Him to become one of His disciples. But he became sad. He was too attached to these possessions. He was too comfortable with things of this earth,

and so could not do what Jesus was asking of him. He was doing the easy, external things well. Jesus was trying to reach his heart, to transform his heart.

We are like the rich young man. We all can tend to simply externalize things. We can do all the Catholic things well: pray often, go Sunday Mass, Holy Days of Obligation, observe days of fasting, try to do acts of charity. Externally we can be fine. But what about our heart? Does Jesus have our heart? Are we more concerned about things of Heaven? Or things of earth?

So what can help us focus more on heaven? To internalize our spiritual lives and focus on the heart? I'm sure there are many things. I'll offer two things. The first is go to confession often. If we want to detach our hearts from this life to attach it more to the next, then confession is where we begin this process. We receive Our Lord's unique love in that sacrament that forgives whatever we are sorry for. We receive that spiritual rejuvenation that we need to continue following Christ and walking towards Heaven.

The second thing is prayer, in particular the Rosary. This past week we celebrated the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. The Rosary is a special prayer for some many reasons. First, it is Mary's gift to us. It wasn't invented by us. She gave it to the Church through St. Dominic. It is our Blessed Mother's gift to us, her children, so that we can get to Heaven. So by praying it we become more attached to the next life.

It is also a great prayer against evil, sin, and satan. When we say the hail mary's we are reminding satan that he lost and is a loser. Every time we say, "Hail Mary full of grace the Lord is with thee..." we are telling him he lost and is a loser. Those words are the angel Gabriel's greeting to Mary. These words announced to her of God's plan for her, to be the mother of Jesus. These are the most joyful words ever spoken, as it put into motion God's salvation in the person of Jesus Christ.

He really hates the Rosary because of this. Padre Pio call's the rosary the weapon to overcome all evil attacks. He actually did battle against demons every night, so he kinda knows what he's talking about. Servant of God Joseph Kentenich puts it more bluntly: "The rosary is a sort of machine gun and atomic bomb, namely a weapon that is far superior to all the weapons of modern warfare in overcoming the enemy of God." As bullets are fed into a machine gun by the belt, so too, as we go through the prayers of the belt that is the Rosary we are pounding the devil over and over, and Mary continues to crush his head with her heel.

It also is a great way to pray as a family. It captures the minds and imaginations even of young children.

So let us take Jesus' challenge to heart. Let us focus on the next more than the pleasures and comforts of this life. Let us go to confession often, receiving His mercy. And let us pray, especially the Rosary. It is Mary's gift to us, and helps us to defeat evil, it helps us grow in holiness and virtue, and helps us get to Heaven.