

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
(Wisdom 7:7-11 / Mark 10:17-30)
14.10.2018

Dear brothers and sisters,

The story of the rich young man that we have just heard is the story of each one of us. Like him, we want to live and to live our lives to the full; we want eternal life, which is life with Christ extending beyond death. We do our best to keep the Ten Commandments, the Ten Laws of Life, with our inevitable ups and downs, falls and rises because we are human and weak. As I have said, we do our best, but we are still unsatisfied and would like to do more. It happens that, from time to time, we are inhabited with inner thoughts like: “What can I do in order to follow God in a better way? How can I go deeper in my relationship with God?”

In today’s gospel passage, Jesus gives an answer to our questions when He says to the rich young man: “Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me. At these words, the face of the rich young man fell and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth”. Jesus adds a little further on: “How hard it is to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Jesus’ answer is clear: It is what we own, what we possess, what we have that hinders us from following Christ, from being with Christ. To be with Christ should take the first place in our lives and this should regulate the use of all that we own, the use we make of all our riches.

The problem is that, very often, we look for security, happiness and assurance in what we have or dream to possess: We think that when we will have a new car, a new house, a new job, a comfortable bank account, new gadgets, objects of any kinds, then we shall be OK! We can also look for security, happiness and assurance in our knowledge and in our degrees, in our power and in our titles, and even in our good deeds, as we try to fulfil God’s commandments. It can happen that we are tempted to save ourselves by our good works instead of receiving our salvation from the Lord, as a gift.

On the contrary, we should choose to find security, happiness and assurance in being with Christ, in walking the path of life with Him, His hand on our shoulder; in becoming aware of the Lord’s presence by our side and even within us, in our hearts, with us striving to remain in His presence; seeking to know and do his will for our lives; in being with Christ who identifies himself with our neighbours, especially the poor and those in need of our help. Our security, our happiness and our assurance should be in the person of Jesus and not in any creature, human being, position in life or thing.

The rich young man wanted eternal life. We want life, eternal life. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. It is by being with Jesus that we will enjoy life to the full.

We are with Jesus when we listen to His Word through which He invites us continually to go further, to go beyond, to enlarge our vision, to be always on the move and never satisfied. His word is really a lamp for our steps and a light for our path, to quote the psalmist.

We are with Jesus when we become sensitive to his coming to us through the poor, the needy, the marginalized, the sick, the elderly, or the one who is different to us.

We have to consent to loose our false securities, in order to espouse Christ like the wise man who espouses wisdom in our first reading. Christ is the Wisdom of God made flesh. Once again, let us listen to what the wise man says about wisdom:

“I esteemed her more than sceptres and thrones;
compared with her, I held riches as nothing.
I reckoned no priceless stone to be her peer,
for compared with her all gold is a pinch of sand,
and beside her silver ranks as mud.
I love her more than health or beauty,
preferred her to the light...
In her company all good things came to me,
at her hands riches not to be numbered”.

To be with Christ and find security in him, to know happiness and assurance is to be engaged in a personal relationship with a living person who loves us and whom we freely choose to love in return with a preferential love. To be with Christ is a love affair! This living person, Christ Jesus, is unique, precious and priceless. He is the person through whom all that we need is given to us. He is the person who tells us how to use all that is ours in the right way. All that we have has been confided to us in order to share it with others and not for our self-satisfaction alone.

Let us ask the Lord to show us how to be and remain with him day after day, minute by minute, breath by breath. Let us ask the Lord for the grace of prayer, unceasing prayer. A life of intimacy with Christ is a gift which is offered to us and that we have to receive; but we have to play our part too in order to be ready to welcome it.