

Homily. 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.B. 13/14 October 2018.

Jesus loves people who seek Him out, people who are searching for meaning and purpose in living. As St. Mark's pointed out, He looked lovingly at the rich man who ran up to Him asking what it was he had to do so as to inherit eternal life. The urgent, keen and sincere desire of this man deeply impressed Jesus.

What Jesus saw was the man's quest to become fully free and alive. Jesus also heard the man describe his quest in terms of doing and getting, like the kind of life he was living and the way he'd gained his great wealth. The man's way of thinking and acting had been shaped by his lifestyle which was one of buying, selling, working hard and amassing wealth. As we're told he wanted Jesus to tell him what it was that he had to do so as to inherit this everlasting prize.

Eternal life, Jesus knew, isn't like this, quite the reverse in truth of fact. Eternal life is a free gift, we call it a grace, that comes to us Un-merited and Un-earned from God. What we've got to do is free ourselves from whatever it is that's holding us back from fully receiving and rejoicing in this God given gift. When Jesus told the man that he had to give up his wealth, thereby giving away his earning and owning mentality, the man's face fell and he chose to walk away from Jesus in sadness. People do the exact same thing today. They want truth and purpose, meaning and genuine inner freedom, but they can't let go of their learned way of living and thinking that blocks them from receiving God's gift.

The disciples didn't understand any of this either. They, like so many today, equated wealth and wellness with God's favour and approval. They, like us, confused something achieved and owned with something freely given from the generous heart and by the gracious hands of God. Those disciples, just like so many Australians today, couldn't understand that good things do come to bad people, as bad things do befall the good.

St. Mark says that Jesus 'gazed' at His astonished disciples, curtly saying that for us such things are impossible, but that nothing is ever impossible for God. Jesus wanted them as He now wants us to realise that all we enjoy are God's gifts. Some have success and others don't; some are lucky in this life with health and wealth and others, through no particular fault of their own, aren't so charmed. Moreover, given the rich man's response, Jesus taught that our benefits can easily form our expectations of God, de-forming them into a kind of transaction, an exchange of benefits, a quid pro quo. God simply doesn't operate in this way even if we usually do, and the way we usually operate easily misleads us about God, blocking us from welcoming God's kindness and generosity which has no favourites.

If we want an example of this we need look no further than Jesus Himself, the perfectly innocent one who lived simply for us, suffered greatly and died cruelly in our stead, rejected and abandoned by all. Yet, His way was approved by God as His Resurrection to Glory confirms. He has become for us by God's choice our gateway to eternal life, our salvation.

If we really listen to Jesus learning to trust in Him with grateful, thankful hearts, then what we most desire and need will be given to us, a gift not

earned, a grace not merited, achieved or inherited by our works, but the answer we're truly seeking. It will come to us for free, a surprise, simply because we place our lives and our faith in Him alone. This is the meaning of our Eucharist, to be active always and everywhere in giving thanks, above all for God's greatest gift, Jesus Christ our life, Saviour and liberator. Let's lift up our hearts to the Lord then, for as we say, it is indeed right and just to give Him thanks and praise.