

GOSPEL

MARK 10:17-30

Jesus was setting out on a journey when a man ran up, knelt before him and put this question to him, ‘Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You must not kill; You must not commit adultery; You must not steal; You must not bring false witness; You must not defraud; Honour your father and mother.’ And he said to him, ‘Master, I have kept all these from my earliest days.’ Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him, and he said, ‘There is one thing you lack. Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ But his face fell at these words and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.

Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’ The disciples were astounded by these words, but Jesus insisted, ‘My children,’ he said to them, ‘how hard it is to enter 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.’ They were more astonished than ever. ‘In that case’ they said to one another, ‘who can be saved?’ Jesus gazed at them. ‘For men’ he said, ‘it is impossible, but not for God: because everything is possible for God.’

Peter took this up. ‘What about us?’ he asked him. ‘We have left everything and followed you.’ Jesus said, ‘I tell you solemnly, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not be repaid a hundred times over, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land – not without persecutions – now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life.’

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

Today’s Gospel, taken from Mark, Chapter 10, is divided into three scenes, punctuated by *three gazes* of Jesus.

The first scene presents the encounter between the Teacher and a fellow who – according to the parallel passage of Matthew – is identified as a “young man”. The encounter of Jesus with a young man. This man runs up to Jesus, kneels and calls him “Good Teacher”. Then he asks: “what must I do to inherit eternal life”, in other

words, happiness. “Eternal life” is not only the afterlife, but is a full life, fulfilled, without limitations. What must we do to achieve it? Jesus’ answer restates the commandments that refer to loving one’s neighbours. In this regard the young man has nothing to reproach; but clearly, observing the precepts is not enough. It does not satisfy his desire for fulfillment. Jesus perceives this desire that the young man bears in his heart; for this reason his response is expressed in an *intense gaze* filled with tenderness and love. The Gospel thus says: “[Jesus] looking upon him loved him”. He realized he was a good young man.... But Jesus also understood his interlocutor’s weakness, and offers him a practical proposal: to give all his possessions to the poor and follow Him. That young man’s heart, however, was divided between two masters: God and money, and he went away sorrowful. This shows that faith and attachment to riches cannot coexist. Thus, in the end, the young man’s initial enthusiasm is dampened in the unhappiness of a sunken *sequela*.

In the second scene the Evangelist frames the eyes of Jesus, and this time it is a *pensive gaze*, one of caution: “[Jesus] looked around and said to his disciples: ‘How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’”. To the astonishment of the disciples, who ask him: “Then who can be saved?”, Jesus responds with a *encouraging gaze* — it is the third gaze — and says: salvation, yes, “with men it is impossible, but not with God!”. If we trust in the Lord, we can overcome all obstacles that impede us from following him on the path of faith. Trust in the Lord. He will give us strength, he gives us salvation, he accompanies us on the way.

And thus we arrive at the third scene, that of Jesus’ solemn declaration: Truly, I say to you those who leave all to follow me shall have eternal life in the age to come and a hundredfold now in this time. This “hundredfold” is comprised of things first possessed and then left, but which shall be restored and multiplied *ad infinitum*. In divesting oneself of possessions, one receives in exchange the comfort of true good; freed from the slavery of things, one earns the freedom of serving out of love; in renouncing possessions, one acquires the joy of giving. As Jesus said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive”.

The young man did not allow himself to be conquered by Jesus’ loving gaze, and thus was not able to change. Only by accepting with humble gratitude the love of the Lord do we free ourselves from the seduction

of idols and the blindness of our illusions. Money, pleasure, success dazzle but then disappoint: they promise life but procure death. The Lord asks us to detach ourselves from these false riches in order to enter into true life, the full, authentic, luminous life. I ask you, young people, young men and young women, who are here now in the Square: “Have you felt Jesus’ gaze upon you? Do you prefer to leave this Square with the joy that Jesus gives us or with the sadness of heart that worldliness offers us?”.

May the Virgin Mary help us to open our heart to Jesus’ love, to Jesus’ gaze, the only One who can satiate our thirst for happiness.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- In your opinion, what is happiness?
- Jesus gazes at each one of us with love, and asks us to follow him, knowing he is the only one who can satiate our thirst for happiness. What are the false things that are perhaps holding you back from following Jesus above all else?
- Freedom and fullness of life is what Jesus is calling you to, ‘not without persecution’ how do you respond to the persecution that inevitably come for the followers of Jesus?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the ‘Glory Be’ or similar prayer.