



The Holy Spirit Province NEWSLETTER



7 October, 2021

RICHES GETTING IN THE ROAD: 28TH SUNDAY B, OCT 10, 2021

Wisdom 7:7-11; Hebrews 4:12-13; Mark 10:17-30

A questionnaire was once distributed to a class of high school students. It asked: 'What would you like to be?' Two-thirds answered: 'A celebrity!' Not an answer Jesus would have given!

Mark, today's gospel storyteller, tells us that Jesus is setting out on a journey when this young man – he is not named - comes running up to him. All enthusiastic, he asks Jesus what he must do to make the most of his life and time on earth. What he is wanting is a greater closeness to God and a greater sense of fulfilment. He has already been walking the right path for any good young Jewish man. He hasn't killed, cheated or robbed anyone. He hasn't fooled around with another man's wife. He has always shown his parents love and respect. But right now, this doesn't seem enough to feel completely at home with God and at peace with himself. There must be more that he can be, and there must be more that he can do. 'What is it?' he asks Jesus.

Jesus takes a shine to this rich young businessman for his evident honesty, sincerity, and goodwill. But Jesus wants to free him from his addiction to possessions and to help him share more with others. Looking him straight in the eye Jesus puts to him one massive challenge: '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.'

Let's hear Jesus saying that to us 21st century people. What would we think? What would we feel? What would we do? Let's hear Jesus, then, asking any one of us to give up every single thing we value and treasure. My family! My friends! My pets! My home! My garden! My kitchen with its new cupboards and appliances! My air conditioner and air fryer! My computer! My smart TV! My smartphone! My iPod! My iPad! My digital camera! My swimming pool! My jacuzzi! My secure job and pay packet! My superannuation! My pension! My gym subscription! My holidays! My concerts! My books! My movies, my videos, my CDs and DVDs! My restaurant meals! My motor car! My football! My cricket! My tennis! My squash! My basketball! My health insurance! Just imagine Jesus asking us to give up just about every possession, pursuit, and hobby we have that gives us meaning and makes life worth living!

And all for what? To keep walking with Jesus along those dusty roads of Palestine? Not being sure of having a roof over my head on any night you care to name! Never being sure of where, when, or whether my next meal will be coming! Being exposed to the jeers and sneers of enemies of Jesus! Travelling light all right, unbelievably light!

If, then, like that rich young man we did meet Jesus on his journey and he was to look steadily at any one of us and say: 'Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor . . .

then come, follow me,' it would be very understandable, perhaps even predictable, that our jaws too would drop, and we too would walk away sad, because we would probably be thinking and feeling: 'Jesus is asking too much of me. The cost is too great. It's beyond me. It's unreal. I can't do it.'

Jesus knows that what he asked of that young man is quite beyond the great majority of human beings. 'For mortals,' he comments, 'it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.' He is speaking, surely, of the special grace of God, and of the power of that grace given to particular individuals, who all through history have left everything to follow and imitate Jesus. St Francis of Assisi is a striking example. In 1206 the crucified Jesus spoke to him three times from the crucifix in the church of San Damiano. 'Go, repair my church,' Jesus said. (He was speaking of his church community). So at the age of 25 Francis completely renounced his inheritance, stripped himself of all his fine clothes and all his possessions, and consecrated himself totally to God. From that day he began to live the teachings of Jesus as literally as possible. He put all his trust in God as his only source of security. The amazing thing is that from that day on, Francis found more joy in living than in the entire first twenty-five years of life. It can be done, then, but not by everyone.

Where does the gospel story leave you and me? Right now, we can't pack up the bare necessities and hit the road. For most of us that would even be irresponsible. But let our gospel remind us that we can let our lives get too cluttered and too complicated by too much stuff and too much attachment to what we have. It's not that possessions are bad in themselves. But they can become a terrible hindrance if they start to possess us and block our minds and hearts from what matters most. Surely our freedom to be loving persons to family and friends, but also to those poor people not far away without even the bare necessities of life. What matters most of all is our relationship with Jesus. He was calling that young man of the story into his company. He keeps calling us too to share his company - to spend time with him and to share our lives with him. Let's do just that, then, in the rest of our prayer together today!

May the passion of Jesus Christ and his everlasting love be always within our minds and hearts!

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