

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

***Attachment to worldly things, to possessions and money, is an enormous obstacle. Of infinitely more value and importance would be spending all our time and energy in searching the depths of God's wisdom and deepening our appreciation of God's ways. This is our lasting treasure.

-In the Gospel, the rich young man is basically a very good man. He has faithfully kept all the laws and commandments of God. (In Jesus' time there were a group of people who believed it is possible for a person to be entirely perfect in this life by actually keeping every little rule, commandment and instruction).

-Jesus loved what he saw as he looked into the sincerity, in this man's heart. He saw the desire for his faithful observance of God's commandments. But Our Lord saw one big obstacle: the man's attachment to his worldly goods was getting in the way of him trusting entirely on God's providence and grace. Jesus looked steadily at the man and saw right into his heart and his challenge came straight from his loving heart when he said to the rich man: You need to let go and be more reliant on God's ways. You need to allow yourself to be utterly dependent on God alone. Then you will be perfect!

-Most people today are at least somewhat concerned about the future. In the short term, they are concerned about several things:

- The value of their dollar at the grocery store. The increased cost of other goods and services. Who will be our next president? Which party will control the U.S. Congress? The wars across the Atlantic. Older adults might be concerned about their long-term finances. Can they support themselves in the future? Will their retirement funds sustain them? Will Social Security and Medicare continue to exist? What kind of world will their children and grandchildren inherit? What will happen to our planet itself? We all have many concerns. Yet, few in our culture think about the poor of the world. Globally, 712 million people, live on less than \$2.15 a day. 37.9 million Americans also live in poverty, which is 1 out of every 11 people in the United States! As Christians and as disciples, we have real obligations toward those who have less. Our Western society and culture probably is the most affluent in the history of the world. Most Westerners, today, have a better life than the nobility of past centuries! Unfortunately, so many are selfish and self-serving. Seldom do they concern themselves about those who suffer real hardship at home or abroad. The young man in the Gospel of Mark was one such person. He was morally good. He kept all the Commandments. But he wanted some assurance of eternal life. Jesus saw the

goodness in the young man and Jesus loved him. So, Jesus invited him to take the leap of greater faith and trust. "Sell what you have and give the proceeds to the poor. Then you can follow me completely!" The scriptures tell us: "His face fell." He couldn't even look at Jesus. The young man could not do what Jesus had asked him to do. He was too attached to all those things that made up his life and lifestyle.

-Later, Jesus told his disciples just how difficult it was for anyone with wealth to enter the Kingdom of God. This should capture the attention of every one of us blessed with a First World lifestyle! How much should we share? How much should we give away? What does God want us to do with whatever we possess? When the young Solomon inherited the Kingdom of Israel, he prayed for wisdom. That wisdom was given to him and it enabled him to gain and achieve all that he needed for a wise governing of the Chosen People. However, Divine Wisdom is also one with the Divine Word of God. And the Book of Hebrews reveals that the Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword. It cuts both ways. It cuts into our hearts and souls. It reveals who we are to God. However, its cut also reveals who we are to ourselves. It can show us what is superfluous and unnecessary in our life and lifestyle. It can enable us to discover what God is asking us on behalf of others. Other scriptures reveal that Jesus is the

personification of God's Word and Divine Wisdom. Jesus has also called each of us to be his disciple for some particular service. Thus, Jesus and the words of his Gospel can guide us in our generosity toward the poor and disadvantaged, here and elsewhere.

-We are truly blessed to be graced with our Catholic faith and practice. We are blessed to live in a First World country. Only God knows what the future will bring for our world, our nation, our politics, our planet. Let us not be overly concerned about our personal future. God always provides for those who are generous. His providence can be material, but it is always spiritual. To be able to live in the freedom of a heart detached from any wealth is a wonderful blessing indeed! So let us pray for Wisdom. Let us pray for detachment. Let us pray for grace and courage. And may we follow Jesus into the future, no matter what the future might bring!