

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Matt 5:3

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Mark 10:17-30; L143B

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: *You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.*" He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words.

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Reflecting on the Gospel

How many of us have wished to meet Jesus? Or to have been one of his followers? Or perhaps, like today's gospel, simply to have been able to ask Jesus a question? The man who does receives a loving look from Jesus. It even sounds like Jesus admired the goodwill of this person, who desired eternal life. The questioner has followed all of the commandments. He is in right standing with the law. But he feels there is more. Jesus, in turn, gives him a challenge that he gave to no other person. Namely, Jesus tells him to sell his many possessions, give the proceeds to the poor, and then follow him.



Now the burden falls back to the man, for he has many possessions. Will he choose to let go of the possessions and follow Jesus? We know that he did not. Instead, he clung to his possessions. He loved them more than he wanted to follow Jesus. And this is a warning shot to all who would follow Jesus. Whom or what do we love more? Possessions? Jesus?

Upon hearing Jesus' command, our face might fall, like the man with many possessions. Somehow it might be easier to simply follow a set of rules, to carry out the dictates of the law. For us, it might be easier to attend Mass each week, including holy days. But Jesus demands more than that. He wants a complete and total commitment of the individual. And with this man, Jesus seems to know that for him, the one thing holding him back is his wealth. So Jesus invites him to discard it.

As mentioned above, it is critical to keep in mind that this is the only person to whom Jesus gives this invitation. And it seems the invite is directed to him precisely because he has so much wealth. Jesus goes for the jugular, as it were. He finds and knows the one thing keeping the man from following him, and zeroes in on it. Can the man discard his possessions? What does Jesus invite us to discard?

Living the Paschal Mystery

Each of us likely has something or another holding us back from a complete and wholehearted commitment to following Jesus. For some it might be a sense of pride and social standing we receive from our position at work. What happens when that is gone? What happens when the job is lost?

Of course, in the end, at our death, we take no earthly possessions with us. What matters more is love, relationships, care, and concern we have shown to others. A desperate clinging to that which is merely passing makes one unfit to be a follower of Jesus. This week we are reminded that no earthly possession, no job title or position, and no status is anything compared to the relationship we have with Jesus as one of his followers.