

TWENTY EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME B2024

Let me start this homily with an observation. Brothers and Sisters, human life offers us a lot of things we enjoy and profit from. Though some of these things are attractive and even pleasing to us, it is, nevertheless, true that we cannot have them all. If so, we have to make a choice, a wise one, so that we may really see what is profitable for us and what is not.

To choose wisely means always that we have to opt for some valuable things and give up others. That is what we see in the first reading of today as Solomon made a judicious choice, in a very crucial moment of his life, as a leader of Israel. Instead of asking God to give him riches and honor, he prayed for the virtue of prudence and the wisdom to understand the process of governing. He preferred wisdom to scepter and throne; he counted gold and silver as nothing with regard to God's wisdom. But, as he preferred wisdom to health and charm, everything else was given to him.

This text teaches us that God's wisdom is more beneficial to us than human knowledge. How many lives have been ruined with regrets and remorse, because people have not been wise enough to make good decision in crucial moments of their lives? How many people have been physically, mentally and emotionally destroyed for having followed the advice of bad counselors?

For a man of God or a woman of God, there is only one valuable thing, that is, the wisdom that comes from God. It consists in the ability to think as God does; to act as God does; to see things as God sees them and to understand them as God does. It is that divine thinking, perception, feeling and understanding that the young man from today's Gospel did not have.

For sure, we have to admire the seriousness of this young man. For the whole of his life, he was faithful to God's commandments and never had he missed fulfilling its requirements. The problem, however, is that his conception of salvation is exclusively selfish. It is all about him and the fulfillment of the law. Once the law is fulfilled, he feels good, at peace with himself. He does not think about other people.

When our Lord asks him about the commandments, he seems to have played well his game. But, what he ignores is that it is not enough to obey the commandments. They should also be applied to the particular circumstances of life as we interact with our fellows. That is why our Lord wants him to extend his understanding of the law.

In fact, Our Lord does not look only at what we are today as we respect the commandments, but also at what we should be. What we should be as good people, generous, compassionate, open to others is as important as obeying the commandments.

In other words, the basic question of our Christian life is not only about us; it is also about others. It is for that reason that the greatest of the commandments is to love God and to love our neighbor. Here the young man seems to be out of touch. The respect of the commandments was not enough to win him the respectability of our Lord.

Not to kill, that is fine; not to commit adultery, that is fine too; not to steal, that is also fine. But, how about sharing a little bit of who you are and what you have with others? How about being a little bit more generous with people as you are with yourself? Not doing things is certainly respectable; but being Christian consists, first of all, in doing things. We are all invited to the moral courage of getting out of our selfishness and the concentration on “I” and to create the relationship of “we” with our brothers and sisters.

Unfortunately, the young man was not ready to accept the vision of our Lord. He was not ready to share a little bit of what he was and what he had with others. His material possessions became a serious obstacle to his relationship with our Lord and his fellows. That explains the statement of our Lord, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”

What does our Lord mean by saying that? First of all, our Lord is not condemning the riches or its possession, but rather the imprisonment of the human heart and mind in them. Material possessions, indeed, tend to fix human hearts to this world as though it were the only reality people have to care for. When the material riches are seen as ultimate reality, it becomes difficult to think beyond its possession or to live without them. That is the reason why the young man went away sad.

Moreover, when people make the material possessions their main concern in life, they tend to appreciate everything in terms of transaction and not value. With such a concept in mind, people forget that there are in the world values other than money, that there are things that money cannot buy. The drama of the rich young man lies here.

That is why the reaction of our Lord, to the astonishment of the disciples, is to reassure them that for God nothing is impossible. In the same way, no one can give up anything for the sake of God’s kingdom without receiving back recompense. The kingdom of God involves equally suffering and persecution; but, at the end of all that, there is eternal life.

Let me conclude: the stake of this Sunday is the importance of making good decisions in life. Only the opening of our hearts to the word of God can enlighten us and guide us in the difficult choices we face on a daily basis in our lives. God’s word is capable of helping us because it is effective, capable of testing our earthly life, our spiritual existence, and disclose the secrets of our hearts. We cannot live and disregard the wisdom that comes from the word of God. If we do so, we run the risk of making bad decisions and bad choices. Let us pray, then, that the Lord may fill us with his wisdom so that we come to good decisions that can allow us to lead a kind of life that brings us into God’s kingdom.

Wisdom 7: 7-11; Hebrews 5: 1-6; Mark 10: 17-30



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