



28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE B

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This reading is composed of three units that form a kind of catechism on the Christian approach to wealth: the rich man, sayings on wealth and the rewards of discipleship.

The rich man (only Matthew calls him young) seeks to know what to do to gain eternal life. Jesus first responds with the commandments, and the man says he has long followed them. Then Jesus adds one condition for following him: Sell everything and give the money to the poor. In Matthew, this is recommended "if you wish to be perfect"; but here it is simply a basic requirement for being a follower of Jesus. Shocked, as we would be, the man walked away.

Then Jesus turns to the disciples and talks of camels and needles. Folklore tells of a gate in Jerusalem called the Needle's Eye, designed too small for a camel to pass through so the traveler must leave possessions behind to enter Jerusalem. This is to emphasize the point that riches can be viewed as a real impediment to following him. The disciples are stunned, for this is a complete reversal of the Jewish belief that wealth was a sign of God's favor. If the wealthy can't make it, then who can possibly be saved? Jesus' response is to focus their attention on God's power, for salvation is not earned but is a gift of God.

Peter then asks what will happen to the disciples, who have given up everything to follow him, as the rich man was invited to do. Jesus replies that they will receive rewards both in this life and in eternity. Mark probably added the comment about persecution to remind his audience that following Christ also involves suffering.

Proclaim this reading as a good storyteller. The dialogues with the rich man and with the disciples are full of strong emotional reactions. Let your tone communicate these reactions clearly. Dealing with wealth is an important issue for American Catholics; your reflection on these strong teachings of Jesus is a valuable, if discomfiting, gift to the listener.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark.

As Jesus was setting out on a journey,
a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him,
"Good Teacher, 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 shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal;
You shall not bear false witness;
You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'"

He said to Jesus,
"Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth."
Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said,
"You lack one thing; go, sell what you own,
and give the money to the poor,
and you will have treasure in heaven;
then come, follow me."

When the man heard this,
he was shocked and went away grieving,
for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples,
"How hard it will be for those who have wealth
to enter the kingdom of God!"
And the disciples were perplexed at these words.
But Jesus said to them again,
"Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!
It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle
than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

They were greatly astounded and said to one another,
"Then who can be saved!"
Jesus looked at them and said,
"For mortals it is impossible, but not for God;
for God all things are possible."

Peter began to say to him,
"Look, we have left everything and followed you."
Jesus said, "Truly I tell you,
there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters
or mother or father or children or fields,
for my sake and for the sake of the good news,
who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age
and in the age to come, eternal life."