

## Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The rich young man wanted to be assured of salvation. He was a good man; an observant Jew and someone Jesus looked on with love. But he was hoping the law would save him. He wanted to be sure of gaining heaven by jumping through the right hoops, at the right time, for the right reasons.

Jesus doesn't reject the importance of faithful and good living, but he offers the young man a relationship that would make sense of the choices involved in following him. Without a loving relationship with God, who calls us to live the best life we can, the fulfillment of any law, civil or moral, is a tyranny. We do not believe in a tyrannical God.

We do believe, however, in a God who makes demands of us, who often challenges us in the places where we are most vulnerable. For the young man, his money was an obstacle. He could not embrace a relationship with Jesus because this would have placed in peril his wealth and the comfort that his many possessions afforded him.

For the earliest Christian community today's Gospel highlights serious issues on which people left their company: the role of the law in following Christ; the divide between rich and poor; the commitment demanded of followers in the earliest community. In comparison to our forebears in faith, we have domesticated this radical edge of the Gospel.

We often comfort ourselves with the assurance that the law will save us, whereas Jesus tells us that salvation comes from a loving relationship with him, shown in the sacrifice of our lives. To the degree that any law enables us to deepen this relationship with Jesus and to serve his people, then it is helpful and good. If a civil or religious law gets in the road, then its moral authority over us is questionable.

In a world where the vast majority of the world's wealth and resources are held and used by a dominantly white, educated and, at least nominally, Christian First World, then the demands of today's Gospel should be as confronting to us as they were to the rich young man. "There is still one thing you lack, sell everything and come follow me." It has suited us to move away from this financially hard teaching of Jesus.

The law and money are in themselves neutral things. They can be used for good or evil. At their worst the law and money seduce us into pride, greed and power. At their best they can serve the liberation of all people and enable our world to better reflect the Kingdom of dignity, justice and equality Jesus taught and lived.

Given that all things are possible for God, let's pray in this Eucharist that we might stop domesticating the Gospel but allow it to lead us more deeply into a relationship with Jesus who looks on us, loves us and calls us to write the law of love on our hearts in such a way that there will be justice for all people.

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