

## 28th Sunday (B)

- One of the greatest joys & privileges that I've had as a chaplain & teacher of seminarians & university students is that of being with young people.
- They remind me of the passion & pain of being a young adult with enthusiasm & ideals, being full of life & discovering direction in life.
- Young people play with ideas that excite them, have minds & hearts that can be influenced & swayed by people who they look up to as their models or idols as they sort out priorities in their lives.
- And eventually they settle on the things they count as most important & take up a certain direction in life & work out, from all the options & choices, all the examples they've had modelled to them throughout their lives, into what it is they will put their hearts & energies.
- In a sense this is a bit simplistic because I'm making it sound as though they eventually put their efforts into one main thing – there are so many things in life that compete for our attention & commitment & how often it is that as we grow older, we discover that we've compromised on the ideals to which we were committed when we were younger.
- But it is in our youth that we develop a basic orientation in life & accordingly set out our plans for life which then are further refined or even discarded when we discover something more precious to which we decide to devote our lives as we refine for ourselves what are the most important priorities for us.
- So today we have the story of the young man in today's gospel; he's undoubtedly a good-living, respectable young man who probably was able to follow the lead of good examples who by their lives showed what goodness was.
- He comes up to Jesus full of a desire for that something more; he wants what Mark calls 'eternal life' - a life that knows no bounds, a life that is not limited by space & time & circumstance, but that keeps on filling his heart.
- Everything he sought, he could acquire with his wealth, status & power—he wanted to know what he lacked & how he could access it.
- We all know this desire & when this young man experiences it, he's attracted to Jesus - & we're told that Jesus gazed upon him & loved him.
- The man boasts about all the commandments he has kept but Jesus tunes into the man's wavelength & says: 'There is one thing you *lack*.'
- That would have got the rich man's attention: the suggestion that he was missing something, but to his shock he was to hear that what he was lacking was a big heart: 'Go, sell everything you own & give everything to the poor.'
- He had to get rid of his possessions & the security & status they bought because they were shrivelling up his heart.

- It wasn't a question of what he could get, but of what he could give – that would fill the void he was aware of.
- Jesus is saying to us: 'Yes, you keep the commandments, more or less. At least you try. Okay. But that is really the bare minimum. The real question is: What do you have to do to expand your heart?'
- So why did he go away sad? What was his problem?
- The rich young man is very earnest, & has been exemplary in obeying God's commandments, but he can't change & let go of controlling his life.
- Life is a gift. How can we accept a gift if our hands are full & we don't want to let anything go. For the young man in today's gospel the problem wasn't wealth, it was the fact that he **possessed** his riches & they possessed him – his security became his prison.
- **He controlled** his life & he thought he could stay in control & possess this fullness of life as well. But he can't & we can't.
- The young man seems to be saying: "I have everything I want in life; there's just one thing I lack - the meaning of life & its fulfillment. If only that could be added to the rest, everything would just be brilliant!"
- But Jesus reverses this expectation - the young man has too much, not too little. It's more about letting go, than about accumulating more.
- As Jesus says: Salvation – finding the life we seek & need – is impossible for us; we can't get it on our own. It comes from God.
- The man in the gospel has a problem with material possession; this is why he went away sad.
- Being rich he was used to control.
- He thought he could save himself if only he knew what more he could do.
- Jesus makes it quite clear that if we truly want to live to the full we have to learn to have empty hands.
- If there is anything to which we are clinging we have to let it go in order to free our hands to be open to receive life from God who is love.
- We are being invited to ask ourselves what is it that is stopping us from receiving what our hearts most longs for. Is there something that is cluttering up my life.
- Whatever it is that is blocking our journey that is the possession which we must give up. Jesus looks steadily at each of us today & loves us.
- I think the gospel says something pertinent to all of us who are here – that we are responsible to awaken & call forth goodness in our young people by the attitudes & priorities we have & the way we live them.