

28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, 10 October 2021

Scriptures: Wisdom 7:7-11; Hebrews 4:12-13; Mark 10:17-30

Homily: Fr. Ken

In the first reading, from the Book of Wisdom in the Hebrew Scriptures, we are given guidance to help us discover what is truly valuable in life.

In the second reading, from the Letter to the Hebrews, we see how it is the very word of God that penetrates the very depths of our hearts.

In the Gospel of Mark, we have the story of the rich man discovering the cost of true discipleship. The story reveals the challenge faced by each one of us to discover a new or renewed scale of values, and to live by those values.

This is the place where we find the person in today's Gospel story. He wants to know what he has to do if he is to experience eternal life, and he is well on his way to achieving his goal. But there is just one problem. He was not only a wealthy man: his wealth was his security.

Jesus then invited this person to embrace a life, trusting in the providence of God, by giving away all his wealth to those who were in need, and committing himself wholeheartedly to the way of the Gospel. But the man trusted in his own ability to provide for himself rather than in God's love for him, and this was his downfall. Jesus wanted to help this man to move beyond his personal needs and desires and open his eyes to the needs of those around him, especially those who were poor.

All those who heard this teaching of Jesus were shocked by it. Their tradition had taught them that God rewarded the just with the blessings of health and wealth. Those who were poor or sick

were regarded as being in some way responsible for their own situation. Now Jesus was teaching something new. Material riches are not so much a reward for virtue as an opportunity to practice virtue by sharing with those in need. Otherwise, they become an obstacle to our achieving the fullness of life. We become self-absorbed and incapable of reaching out in love to others. This goes so much against the grain of our human thinking that Jesus has to assure the disciples that this is possible only with the help of our loving God.

In the seventeen years that I have been blessed to serve as pastor of St. Rita's parish, we have together accomplished a great deal. Following our motto, "We Are the Church", we have engaged with individual parishioners and with active parish committees, to discuss, analyze, evaluate, and respond actively to a multitude of challenges and opportunities. We have produced creative ideas and practical projects and programs to further our thriving parish, and, in prior years, our dedicated school family.

Apart from such educational opportunities as our Religious Education Program, and our popular Lenten Lecture Series, and other events, we have greatly expanded our outreach to the poor, locally and globally. In particular, we have strengthened and expanded the work and success of our Guatemala Mission Project and our St. Vincent de Paul Society. In previous years, we have annually provided meals and overnight shelter for homeless people during the winter months, something which sadly has not been possible during the current COVID pandemic. However, the newly established bi-monthly Food Drop-Off program continues to be a most successful opportunity for all parishioners to directly aid poor and needy homeless families in our local community. Finally, our next Food Drop-Off weekend is slated for Oct. 23-24. We ask that you be as generous as possible by donating food for those families in need.

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