

28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 2021 B

**“Jesus, looking at him, loved him.”** Those are truly beautiful words ... imagine being looked at, with love, by Christ. I wonder if Jesus looked at this young man with a particular affection because He saw in him a kindred spirit, someone whose life was also shaped by seeking the will of God. We can still sense this young person’s urgency – he comes running up to Jesus, afraid that he might miss Him before he can ask what is uppermost in his mind: **“Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”** Perhaps he had asked other rabbis this same question before, but their answers had not satisfied him. Even his life-long obedience to the Commandments did not quiet his soul ... he felt there was something more, something greater he was called to with his life.

As in any human endeavor, pursuing that something greater carries a cost. And here, the story takes a sad turn ... having come to the right Person with the right question, and having come so close to the answer, this young man who had come running to Jesus now slowly walks away, his enthusiasm yielding to disappointment and sadness. What Jesus is asking seems too much, too hard. The usual interpretation of his sadness was that he was too attached to his wealth, unwilling to let go of his possessions to follow Christ. That may well be what Mark intended, because that hurdle still faces us today – sometimes with our money, but perhaps even more with our time and our openness to others. ***It is perhaps easier to make great sacrifices that get applause than those small ones that no one much notices.***

But there is another way to think of this man’s sadness – willing and indeed EAGER to follow Jesus, but saddened by ***how much time and effort it would involve*** to do what Jesus asked: “First, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor; then come back and follow Me.” He had a lot; to inventory and organize his property, to put it up for sale, to wait for buyers – these were the days before eBay or Craigslist, after all – and to be responsible with giving the proceeds away ... ***all of that would take time***. I imagine that he wanted his life to change immediately, to leave everything behind in that instant and start all over. But

Jesus does not allow this. First, he must learn patience and be a good steward of what had been entrusted to him; *only then, and precisely through that process*, would he become a disciple.

Holiness does not come in a moment. Most often, our journey of faith will involve long, patient perseverance with “the same” ... the same spouse, the same children or parents, the same job, the same parish, the same schoolwork, the same tasks. But *it is precisely in that sameness that we can take root and grow*; not a dull repetition of routine, but *a stable, loving, and patient dedication to the here and now, as we GRADUALLY but surely mature as disciples*. We need a place to stand in order to reach; we need a foundation on which to build; we need a center to draw a circle. Even if we do not lose all we own, it is a daily challenge to live with our blessings in a holy day, to have them, not for OUR purposes, but for God’s; to possess things without things possessing our hearts.

Each one of us can know that at this moment, Jesus looking at me and loving me. In that GAZE, we can find the strength to do whatever He asks today, this week, next month. Pick one or two simple good deeds you have put off for a while in the busyness of life, and do them this week. It is those small sacrifices that gradually shape us into disciples who can say like Mary: “Let it be done according to Your word” with a serene confidence that while hope can seem hard to find in the world today, *nothing is impossible for God*.