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Commentary on the Gospel: "Looking upon him he loved him"

Gospel for the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B), and commentary.

Gospel (*Mk* 10:17-30)

And as Jesus was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God

alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’”

And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth.”

And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It

is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “Then who can be saved?”

Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”

Peter began to say to him, “Lo, we have left everything and followed you.”

Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Commentary

The Gospel passage for this Sunday's liturgy presents to us with a dramatic scene. We encounter, in a few verses, the desperate search for happiness that all men and women share in, the thirst for meaning that is deep in each person's heart, and that we seek to satisfy by every means possible.

We see the urgency of that need in the rich young man, who came *running up* to Jesus. He realized this was his only chance to solve his heart's deep unrest and was determined to take advantage of it. All of us can see ourselves reflected in his eagerness to reach Jesus. Upon arriving, he *kneels* before our Lord, adding to his rush to reach him, the gesture of a person beseeching a favor.

We are also struck by Jesus' attitude towards the one who is petitioning him. Specifically, our hearts are moved by Saint Mark's brief words: *Jesus looking upon him loved him.*

Unfortunately, many people think they need to chase after happiness to reach it, and fail to realize that there is no need to pursue it. Happiness has come to us; it chases after us and simply waits for us to turn around and let ourselves be embraced.

Because happiness took on flesh and became Man: "the happiness you seek, the happiness you have a right to enjoy has a name and a face: it is Jesus of Nazareth."[1]

God loves us so much that at times it is hard for us to believe it. But Christ's gestures in this Gospel passage leave no room for doubt: they are the gestures of a Person in love.

Our Lord is in no hurry with us: he has time to “look upon us.” We, on the contrary, so often treat Jesus hastily, because we are too concerned about seeking happiness where it can’t be found.

Our Lord “takes delight” in us: so much so that eyewitnesses of this scene recognize in his look that he *loved* that young man seeking meaning for his life. The testimony of Sacred Scripture and of the saints is unanimous in this regard. The Lord “delights” in the children of men, the book of Proverbs tells us;[2] and Saint Josemaria does not hesitate to say that the Blessed Trinity has fallen in love with man.[3]

We know that this passage ends sadly. The young man departs as quickly as he had come, as soon as our Lord tells him what he has also told us: “My son, give me your heart.”[4] Happiness has come to

seek us. But we need to realize that “I am being asked for very little compared to how much I am being given.”^[5] Our accepting Jesus’ call, fully and without fear, determines whether our life will be happy for all eternity like the saints, or rather falls into oblivion like this young man whose name we don’t even know.

[1] Benedict XVI, Address at WYD in Cologne, 18 August 2005.

[2] Cf. *Prov.* 8:31.

[3] Cf. *Christ is Passing By*, no. 84.

[4] *Prov* 23:26.

[5] Saint Josemaria, *Furrow*, no. 5.

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