

HOMILY ~ 28th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME OCTOBER 9/10, 2021

The writer, Earnest Hemingway, had a very wise practice. On the first day of each New Year, he gave away some of his most prized possessions. When asked about this he said: "If I can give these things away, then I own them. But if I cannot give them away because they have somehow become so important to me, then they own me." So, what do you think about this practice? Think about your most prized possessions. How difficult would it be for you to give them away?

In the Gospel reading, we hear about the man who asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. He is a good man. He is already following all of the Commandments. But he must feel that something is missing from his life because he is asking the question. We learn that inheriting eternal life requires more than following all of the rules. Jesus looks at him, loves him and tells him to sell everything he has, give to the poor and follow him. The man goes away sad because he has many possessions. Does he own his possessions or do his possessions own him? He is the only person in Scripture who goes away from Jesus sad. The man was sad because he knew his life was incomplete as it was. He was given the chance to do something great with his life, and his possessions held him back. Can you imagine getting the opportunity to know Jesus when he was on earth in a human body and turning it down? He decided he needed his possessions more than he needed God.

How important are money and possessions to you? As a culture, we value wealth and the power and the prestige that usually goes along with it. When we are doing well financially, we sometimes think we do not really need God. Sometimes instead of keeping God at the center of our lives, we push him to the side just in case we may need him some day. We think we can take care of things ourselves until something happens in our lives that cannot be fixed with money. We tend to take

credit for the things that go right in our lives and blame God for the things that go wrong. When things go wrong we ask, how could God let this happen?

Jesus tells us in the Gospel that it is hard to enter the kingdom of God. "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God." Jesus looks at us, loves us and wants us to follow him. He is giving each of us this invitation. He does not want anything to stand between him and each one of us. So, what is standing between you and God? If you asked God today: "What must I do to inherit eternal life," what would his answer be?

In his 2005 commencement speech at Kenyon College, the author David Foster Wallace said something really thought provoking. "In the day to day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. It is the kind of worship you just gradually slip into, day after day, getting more and more selective about what you see and how you measure value without ever being fully aware that that's what you are doing."

So, have you slipped into worshipping something other than God? What are the things that have become more important than our relationship with God? What has become more important than personal prayer? What has become more important than coming to Mass on the weekend? What has become more important than loving and serving and being kind to the people around us? Do you own your possessions or do your possessions own you? Are you totally happy with your life as it is going right now? Do you have the sense that something is missing from your life? Ask Jesus the question that the man asked in the Gospel reading today, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Are you going to go away sad, or are you going to follow Jesus? The choice is yours.

Love & Peace,
Fr. Jim