

Friday (St. Ignatius of Loyola)

The first point is to remember, pondering with deep affection, how much God has done for me, how much he has given me of what he possesses and, further, how according to his divine plan, it is the Lord's wish to give me himself. Then I shall reflect within myself and consider what, if I were to respond as a reasonable person, I ought for my part to offer and give him, that is to say, all that I possess and myself as well, saying, as one making a gift with heartfelt love:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will—all that I have and call my own. You gave it all to me, to you I return it. Everything is yours, dispose of it entirely according to your will. Give me only the love of you, together with your love and grace for that is enough for me.

Scripture (Mt. 13:44-46)

The Kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys the field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.

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28th Week of Ordinary Time

Your God is where your heart is

The meeting between Jesus and the rich man (Mk 10:17-30) is, for me, one of the most challenging and disturbing passages in the Gospel. There is a sense of urgency, an almost desperate hunger, in the man's approach: for a man of wealth, one who has status, to run is 'not the done thing', (he'd have to hitch up his robes – impossible to do in a dignified manner!), and to kneel before another man in public is to lose all dignity. Addressing Jesus as 'Good' teacher is giving to Jesus the status that belongs to God, which suggests that the man knew enough about Jesus, to know that he would have the answer to his burning question: 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' This is not, as I thought for many years, about getting into heaven, but about living by the eternal truths - God's love – that Jesus offered in the new relationship with God he was establishing. Significantly, Jesus puts only those Commandments to him that deal with relations between humans, which the man has always kept: he is a good man, with a good heart. Jesus looking steadily at him and loving him must have penetrated deeply. They both know this is a critical moment in the man's life. It is the other Commandments, those dealing with the relationship with God, that sum up 'the one thing' the man needs, and he knows Jesus is the one who can bring him into it.

Out of this penetrating look of love comes the invitation: leave everything and follow me. He isn't calling the man to 'repent' of a life of sin; he's calling him to repent of a good life! The man has lived by the Old Covenant, and now it is time to move forward into the new one that Jesus brings. 'He went away sad' (as opposed to dismissing or arguing with Jesus' words) suggests that the man wanted to follow Jesus, but couldn't. He leaves with a heavy heart back to his secure life of luxury.

The disciples are shocked (again!) when Jesus (also with a heavy heart, I think) says how hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom. They had always been taught that wealth was a sign of God's favour (the flipside of illness being a punishment for sin), so now they have to learn that the Kingdom isn't offered to people as a reward: it is impossible for humans, by their own efforts, to enter the Kingdom. It is gift.

The answer to Peter's 'What about us?' question emphasises that Jesus came to offer a new way of life now (reaching fullness in the next life), something that Solomon had experienced (Wisdom 7:7-11). When he had the chance to ask for anything he wanted, he had asked for God's Wisdom, rather than wealth or power. God gave him the lot, which means that when Solomon says he values Wisdom more than anything else, he speaks from a position of knowing the benefits of both.

I may not consider myself as 'rich' (though I'm sure over 90% of the world would disagree), but wealth isn't just money: it's possessions, habits, routines or attitudes that motivate me and provide me with a sense of comfort, security or status. By not having a name the rich man can be anyone, and that invites me to take his place. The questions I then face are tough. Do I run up and kneel to ask Jesus 'what must I do?' or do I gently saunter by and ask how my life can be tweaked a bit? In prayer, do I quietly allow Jesus to look at me and love me long enough to hear the invitation? When I hear of the 'one thing' I need to let go of, (it doesn't have to be a one off, all or nothing question: it might be something for today, or a particular habit) do I believe the rewards of discipleship really are greater than the rewards of 'wealth'? Am I free to change? Martin Bennett

Monday (Julian of Norwich)

This is the cause why we are not at rest in heart and soul: that we seek rest in things that are so little that there is no rest in them, and we do not know our God who is all mighty, all wise and all good. For he is true rest. No soul can have rest until it finds created things are empty. When the soul gives up all for love, so that it can have him that is all, then it finds true rest. God, of your goodness, give me yourself, for you are enough for me.

Scripture (Mark 10:17-22)

A man ran up to Jesus and fell on his knees before him "Good teacher," he asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered "You know the commandments." "Teacher," he declared, "All these I have kept since I was a boy." Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus said to his disciples "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Tuesday (Metropolitan Anthony)

There are passages of the gospel which make our hearts burn, which give light to our intelligence and shake up our will. These passages reveal the points where God and his image in us already coincide, the stage we have already reached, perhaps only momentarily, fleetingly, in becoming what we are called to be. We should note these passages carefully. They are the points at which God's image is already present in us. And from these beginnings we can strive to continue our transformation into the person we feel we want and ought to be. We must be faithful to these revelations.

Scripture (Philippians 3:8-10)

Because of the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, I count everything else as loss. For him, I have accepted the loss of all other things, and look on them as filth if only I can gain Christ and be given a place in him, with the uprightness I have gained, not from the Law but through faith in Christ, an uprightness from God, based on faith, that I may come to know him and the power of his resurrection.

Wednesday (Meister Eckhart)

Whoever possesses God in their being, has him in a divine manner, and he shines out to them in all things; for them all things taste of God and in all things it is God's image that they see. God is always radiant in them; they are inwardly detached from the world and are in-formed by the loving presence of their God. If someone loves something passionately with all their might, so that nothing else pleases them or touches their heart, and they desire that alone and nothing else, then certainly, whatever they are doing or are setting out to do, the object of their love will never be extinguished in them, but they will find his image in all things.

Scripture (Wisdom 7:1,5-11)

I, too am mortal like everyone else, a descendant of the first man formed from the earth. No king has known any other beginning of life. And so I prayed and understanding was given me. I esteemed her more than sceptres and thrones; compared with her I held riches as nothing. Compared with her, all gold is a pinch of sand. I loved her more than health or beauty. In her company, all good things came to me, and at her hands, incalculable wealth.

Thursday (St. John of the Cross)

The Word, the Son of God, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is hidden in essence and in presence in the inmost being of the soul. That soul, therefore, that will find Him, must go out from all things in will and affection, and all things must be to it as if they existed not. Do not rest, therefore, on what your senses can embrace; never seek to satisfy yourself with what you understand of God, but rather with what you do not understand; and never rest on the love of, and delight in, that which you can understand and feel, but rather on that which is beyond your understanding and feeling.

Scripture (1 Cor. 2:11-16)

Nobody knows the qualities of God except the Spirit of God. Now, the Spirit we have received is not the spirit of the world but God's own Spirit, so that we can understand the lavish gifts God has given us. And these are what we speak of, not in the terms learned from human philosophy, but in terms learned from the Spirit. The natural person has no room for the gifts of God's Spirit; to him they are folly.