

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, May 27th 2013

Oh, buckle up for safety... It's the gospel we all hate!

At least it can be at best confusing and exasperating. Yep.

“You are lacking in one thing.

Go, sell what you have and give to the poor

and you will have treasure in heaven;

then, come, follow me.”

For decades now I have idealized this passage about “selling all I have...” Yet now I'd say more that I have domesticated Jesus' command. Sure, the Christian churches have roundly neglected these words of Jesus. Sure, we have brought them under our control and explained them away.

These days, however, I find the actions of Pope Francis to be daunting and really scary. He's chosen to accentuate that part of Francis of Assisi's life that has to do with not only simplifying our life styles, but embracing poverty.

That's bad news for us who live comfortably above the poverty line. At least it could be if we listen. When I even begin to entertain Jesus' words (and Francis' example), I do find a bit of that long-time-longing for such simplicity, but only in the midst of terror and defensiveness.

My new BFF, Dom Sebastian Moore described the human project as “a whole complex of systems dedicated to MY survival...” (The Crucified Jesus is No Stranger, p. 43) So, it's not that the rich young man was a worse sinner than you or me.

It's just that he typifies our lot, our defensive posturing aimed at protecting my “stuff” or my “rights” or my “way of life.” It's this sad but true picture of humanity that is revealed in his abandoning Jesus because “he had many possessions.” Jesus' command piqued his defensiveness, allowing underlying grief to bubble to the surface.

Given all that, I pray that by sitting in the mystery of my demand for survival on my terms and this call to freedom, that some new movement of the Holy Spirit may come alive. Then, I wager, the embrace of simplicity, even poverty, becomes a joyful expression of my/our discipleship.

Happy Ordinary Time!

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