

## Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Sep 5th 2014

“It does not concern me in the least that I be judged by you or any human tribunal.” (1 Cor 4:3)

“The salvation of the just comes from the Lord.” (Psalm 37:39)

I recently had the great honor and joy of witnessing my brother Aaron make his First Vows for the Jesuits, transitioning him from a Novice to a Jesuit Scholastic. This first major step toward becoming a Jesuit priest includes the words “perpetual” and “forever”, meaning that once vowed, all Jesuits promise to live that way for life; no backing out. The wording of the vows is so incredibly intense and beautiful that I couldn’t help but ponder my own call to live out a version in my own life.

He vowed poverty: a renouncement of the pursuit of material possessions. In doing so, he freed himself from being owned by his belongings. As a young physician, others frequently ask about my salary or remind me of which fields will collect me the highest pay. Keeping a heart that desires to serve God only how He wants to use the talents He gave me is a substantial challenge in this field.

He vowed chastity: a continued promise to consummate only his marriage with the Lord as his only Spouse. As a young man choosing to save myself for marriage, my celibacy will end at my wedding, however I must choose daily to practice the chaste lifestyle that I will continue to live one day as a married man. Offering my bodily temptations to the Lord and nailing them to His Cross lets me begin to learn the self-sacrificial role that I will play as a husband and father. Needless to say, this path is neither popular nor easy.

He vowed obedience: a gift of his freedom given to God and his superiors in agreeing to serve wherever he is sent. In residency I have many bosses and I have the duty to frequently fight the desire to be independent or self-sufficient. Outside residency, I crave the ability to choose where I travel and eventually live. My brother’s vow of obedience helps me remember that my anxieties about future jobs are fruitless. I seek a heart that will rejoice in serving wherever my Superior sends me.

Living out these three vows, in whichever vocation, will inevitably set us on a crash course with contemporary cultural thought. When we do start drawing that ridicule (it doesn’t take long), our First Reading is there to support us. St. Paul reminds us that the Lord is the only one to judge us. He, through Scripture and the Church, has given us His desires for how He wants us to live our lives. We

will be ridiculed for living them out, however. This realization begs the question of what value worldly comforts should have on our lives.

Where do I seek my salvation, my comfort? In a luxurious house, exciting travel, food in nice restaurants, fine whiskeys, and other material pursuits bought with my money? Or rather in pleasing my body sexually? Or perhaps in a sense of authority with control over other people? Each of these examples stands in stark contrast to the three vows my brother just took.

Our Psalm states so simply, “The salvation of the just comes from the Lord.” Still further, the first stanza addresses the vast majority of those worldly pursuits that I am tricked into thinking will bring me comfort: a beautiful home, being well-fed, and having the desires of my heart fulfilled. “Trust in the LORD and do good, that you may dwell in the land and be fed in security. Take delight in the Lord and he will grant you your heart’s requests.” What more could I want?

While these three vows will undoubtedly garner scorn and worldly isolation, they are part of what Scripture explains will bring us closer to God and the salvation He offers us. Let us together seek ways that we can more intentionally live out a focus on poverty, chastity, and obedience in our own vocations.

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