

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

My beloved brothers and sister: in the Gospel story for today, the Young Man who asked the Lord Jesus: “Lord, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Was sincerely seeking a more meaningful life. We know this, because Jesus looked at him with love. This was the look of love of the Creator directed towards His beloved creature and son. It was the look of love of a father gazing upon a son who is striving to do all of the right things. It was also the look of love of the Divine Master who was seeking to invite the young man into the depths of friendship with Himself- to become His disciple!

Jesus takes him seriously and says to him: “If you are really serious, then go and get rid of all of the things you are attached to.” Why would Jesus be so demanding of him; why is Jesus so demanding of us? Doesn’t He know we are poor, fallen human beings? The reason is very simple, but no less demanding: it is because Jesus truly loves him and us, and true love always demands what is best for the beloved. True love never settles for mediocrity, and it was because this young man was so attached to money and to the things of this world and to worldly success, he was in danger of losing himself to mediocrity, instead of fulfilling himself in the fullness of God!

Jesus then uses a visual parable for His disciples that they would have immediately understood: the image of the camel passing through the eye of the needle. The camel was the largest of animals to be found in the Holy Land, the eye of the needle is the smallest passage through which we can actually see. It was also the name of a gate through the Jerusalem city walls, which required that a man stoop over and enter sideways to get through the gate into the Temple complex, the holiest place on earth! The way of Jesus is hard, it is demanding and requires of us our complete commitment and self-denial; it is the way of the cross, it is the only way into a deeper friendship with Jesus Christ. Today, Jesus asks us to examine ourselves with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and to ask ourselves: “what are the attachments in my life that prevent me from entering this profound intimacy with Jesus?” Here is a hint: much of it is trying to have my own way rather than the way of God!