

**Homily – Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
Mary, Mother of the Church Parish – October 10, 2021**

“God’s word is sharper than any two-edged sword” says the Letter to the Hebrews. The word challenges our vision and values, our priorities and desires.

Let us stand for a moment with the young man who asks Jesus what he must do to “inherit eternal life.” His request is very admirable. He is a virtuous person. Jesus loves him very much and gives him a challenge in five steps: *go, sell, give, come, follow me*. In the gospels, Jesus invites many individuals to follow him. Why does this person reluctantly go away instead? Because possessions have a special power to hinder missionary discipleship.

If you are hoping to go to heaven to own a huge mansion there, with a private spa, a car collection, a big private jet and a bigger yacht, I am sorry to disappoint you; that’s not it. We are not in a position to judge the young man, for the world in which we live each day greatly values possessions. Those who have many things struggle to keep and protect them. Those who lack many possessions struggle to get them. None of us escapes this influence. All of us have material needs and we need to work to satisfy them, but you can only drive one car and sleep in one bed at a time. Their purpose is not to give you self-confidence, but to help you get around and rest, for you to carry out the mission that God gives you as a disciple. The Lord reminds us today that objects are means. God provides you with the means you need to do his will.

Each of us resembles the young man. We, too, find it difficult to follow Jesus along the way to Jerusalem, Calvary, and the cross. Moreover, we might be shocked by what Jesus tells the man. So, let us stand for a moment with Jesus’ disciples. We find that they are alarmed

and astonished. They ask how can anyone enter into the kingdom of eternal life – if what Jesus says is to be taken literally? When Jesus responds, the disciples seek a way out.

The answer lies in this: God’s call and gift alone create the true disciple. The world and its prizes are ultimately insignificant, as is merely human wisdom. By our own unaided effort, it would be impossible to be authentic disciples. We need God’s gift and help. The Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. (Cf. Lk 11:13).

Pope Francis says that the very Word of God was made flesh, humbled and impoverished himself for us, “to make us rich in the gifts of salvation, of the word, of grace. ... being poor is allowing yourself to be enriched by the poverty of Christ and not wanting a wealth of other treasures which are not those of Christ, it is doing what Christ did.” It is giving of your own and not from excess.

This parish is already a sign of Christ’s poverty making us rich, through the generosity of its parishioners. Our society has the bad habit of pricing everything in dollars. We do not do that! We celebrate the gift of yourselves for the Church because it is God’s gift for us, which is priceless. Thank you! Thank you!

Today, Jesus looks intently into our lives and quietly affirms the simple, but profound, truth – that life in its fullness – eternal life – is not to be had by accumulating things, but by divesting ourselves of whatever keeps us from following him. The way to be truly rich is to die to wealth. It’s so simple – but also difficult! Yes, “God’s word is sharper than any two-edged sword!” The Holy Spirit gives us all we need to respond in faith and become true missionary disciples!

Blessed Mother of the Church, teach us to pray only for the Holy Spirit, to make God’s will our own. *Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!*