



Some reflections inspired by online copyrighted commentaries and homilies

**October 10, 2021**

**Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

An elderly man bought a lottery ticket and won a million dollars. His children found out about this before he did. They were afraid to tell him because he had a weak heart and they feared that the shock would kill him. They went to the parish priest, who was a close friend of their father's, to seek advice. The priest said, "Don't worry. I'll take care of this. I'll test the waters." So, he went to his old friend. They sat down and had a drink. In the middle of their conversation the priest said, "Frank, I often wondered, what would you do if you won a million dollars?" Without a moment's hesitation, the man said, "I would give it all to the church." And the priest dropped dead of a heart attack!

Money is power—the power to build up and the power to destroy. It is probably because of our focus on money that we might conclude that today's story about Jesus and the rich man is about wealth. The story does tell us that the man went away sad because he had many possessions. But today's story is not really about money or possessions. It is about love and trust. In our society, we view very few things as more important than money.

The love is amply testified in the story. We can see it in the enthusiasm of the rich man as he runs up to Jesus and kneels before him. We can see it in his honest desire to find eternal life and his belief that Jesus can show him the way. We can see it in his goodness as he shares with Jesus that he has kept all of God's commandments since his youth. Jesus, too, sees this man's goodness and he loves him. There is every reason to believe that the man knew that Jesus loved him. But the tragedy of the story is that the man did not believe in that love enough. He did not believe enough in Jesus' love to trust him. Jesus asks him to give up all his possessions and that is something that the man cannot do. But his failure to do so was not a failure of generosity, but a failure of trust. He wondered whether Jesus would cheat him, whether Jesus would sell him short. He should have been able to trust that if Jesus was asking him to let go of what he had, it was only because Jesus was going to give him something better. But he could not believe that. His possessions were good things, but Jesus wanted to give him more. Because he could not trust Jesus, he walks away, holding on to the possessions that he has but leaving behind what could have been much more.

This story asks us to trust that when we must let go of good things in our life, remember God has not forgotten us. In fact, God is preparing to offer us another good thing. Jesus asked the rich man to let go of his possessions, his material wealth. Perhaps God is asking us to have a similar attitude in this economic downturn. Many of us are struggling financially. But there are a variety of things of which we could be asked to let go. We could be asked to let go of a relationship, of a project, of a dream, of ability. As we grow older, we may have to let go of some of our energy, our mobility, or some aspect of our health. All these things are good things, but as life moves on there are times when we can no longer hold on to them. It is then we must let them go. It is then we need to trust that God has not forgotten us, and God will still bless us.

Today's gospel is not about possessions. It is about the freedom to trust and believe that when we must let go of one thing in our life, God will still remember us. This is what the rich man in the Gospel could not do. We are called to make a different choice. We are called to support one another in the faith that when we must let go of any good thing, God is still with us. When we must let go of something we would rather hold on to, it is only so that we can make room for God to bless us again.

Reflection: Fr. George Smiga