

Readings for October 10, 2021 – 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Fill Us With Your Love!

It's not easy to be a follower, but if we recognize that we are filled with God's love, we will want to respond in love as well. How hard it is, yet Jesus reassures us, "all things are possible with God!" Living in love, we will have what we need to get it right. God fills us – with love, and with everything we need.

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, we ask you today: teach us, fill us, help us to get things right.
Amen

Reading I **Wis 7:7-11**

I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.
I preferred her to scepter and throne, and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her,
nor did I liken any priceless gem to her; because all gold, in view of her, is a little sand,
and before her, silver is to be accounted mire. Beyond health and comeliness I loved her,
and I chose to have her rather than the light, because the splendor of her never yields to sleep.
Yet all good things together came to me in her company, and countless riches at her hands.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 90:12-13, 14-15, 16-17

R. (14) Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart.
Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants!

R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!

Fill us at daybreak with your kindness, that we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.
Make us glad, for the days when you afflicted us, for the years when we saw evil.

R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!

Let your work be seen by your servants and your glory by their children;
and may the gracious care of the LORD our God be ours;
prosper the work of our hands for us! Prosper the work of our hands!

R. Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!

Reading II **Heb 4:12-13**

Brothers and sisters: Indeed the word of God is living and effective,
sharper than any two-edged sword,
penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow,
and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.
No creature is concealed from him,
but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

Gospel Mk 10:17-30

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: *You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.*"

He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth."

Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "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." At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"

The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God."

Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you."

Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come."

Related Reflections

The story is told of a visitor who had just arrived at a monastery where he was going to stay for a retreat. The monk showed this visitor to his room and very hospitably said: *"You're very welcome here and we hope you enjoy your stay. If there's anything you need, just let us know and we'll show you how to live without it."* What a great way to express what we need and don't need. I would imagine that person's reaction was much like the response the apostles must have had in our gospel story today. When they heard Jesus' teaching about the difficulty of being rich and entering the kingdom of God, and about giving up everything to follow him, they must have squirmed.

When Jesus said: *'it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God'*, it was a hard saying for the disciples to grasp. Wealth was considered to be a sign of God's favor. So if the rich young man could not enter the kingdom, who could? Tradition tells us that the 'eye of the needle' was a small, narrow gate into the city of Jerusalem. In order for camels to make it through, they would have to lower themselves to get through. They would also have to be rid of any excess baggage that would get in their way. To the rich young man and the disciples, Jesus was asking them to trust in God, not anything else, for entrance into his kingdom.

We all tend to cling to different types of 'riches' that hinder us from receiving God's life fully. Material wealth is one example because it could make us rely on something other than God, and can blind us to our need for God. Other 'riches' that may hinder us spiritually may be a bad habit, or a mental attitude, or prejudices against certain people.

In answer to Peter's question: "Who then can be saved?" we already know. God shows no partiality; God offers salvation to everyone. Maybe we can learn something from that camel. If we want to enter eternal life,

- We need to lower ourselves on our knees in prayer and humility.
- We need to get rid of whatever baggage is hindering our spiritual growth.
- And we need to follow the Master through the gate to the other side with lots of faith and trust.

- Sr. Rosemary Finnegan, O.P.

From Pope Francis:

'Faith and attachment to riches cannot co-exist'

"In the third scene, that of Jesus' solemn declaration [about having eternal life a hundred times more], 'this hundred times more' is made up of the things that are first possessed and then left, but which are found infinitely multiplied.

We deprive ourselves of good, and receive in exchange the joy of the true good; we free ourselves from slavery to things, and we win the liberty of service out of love; we renounce possessing, and we attain the happiness of giving. About which Jesus said, 'there is more joy in giving than receiving.'

The youth did not allow himself to be conquered by the loving gaze of Jesus and thus he wasn't able to change. Only in welcoming with humble gratitude the Lord's love do we free ourselves from the seduction of idols and the blindness of our illusions. Money, pleasure, and success dazzle, but later they disappoint; they promise life, but cause death. The Lord asks of us a detachment from these false riches to enter into true life, a full life that is authentic and luminous.

Pope Francis, Angelus, Oct. 11, 2015

In another reflection on this reading, Pope Francis said:

"The Lord does not know how to give less than everything; when he gives something, he gives himself, which is everything". (Feb. 28, 2017)

When we allow others to do things for us, God's goodness shines through them. Poverty is not so much about want or need; it is about relationship. Poverty impels us to reflect on our lives in the world from the position of weakness, dependency and vulnerability. It impels us to empty our pockets—not of money— but the pockets of our hearts, minds, wills—those places where we store up things for ourselves and isolate ourselves from real relationship with others.

Poverty calls us to be vulnerable, open and receptive to others, to allow others into our lives and to be free enough to enter into the lives of others. While Clare calls us to be poor so that we may enter into relationship with the poor Christ, they also ask us to be poor so as to enter into relationship with our poor brothers and sisters in whom Christ lives. — from the book [Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love](#) by Ilia Delio, OSF (Franciscan Media)

Meditation Suggestion:

Take 5-10 minutes to silently reflect on the following thoughts and on the prayer. Then, share any thoughts that came up for you with the group, if you are willing.

Reflect, today, on the things that you might be unwilling to give up – the things you put ahead of God. What might help you to let go of these things (or habits, or attitudes)? Why do you think Jesus places such emphasis on poverty, simplicity and humility? Do we realize that what God offers is enough? That it completely sustains us? What are your feelings about this prayer from St. Ignatius?

Suscipe Prayer

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me. *(St. Ignatius of Loyola – 1491-1556)*

Discussion Questions

Can you understand why the man “went away sad?” What do you think he’s feeling and thinking after this talk with Jesus? (Also notice how Jesus reacts to him).

Do we truly believe that “all things are possible for God,” as Jesus reminds us in this Gospel reading, or do we often have to be reminded of God’s great love, great power, and great desire for our well-being?

Have you ever had an experience of thinking a situation was impossible, but then God brought something good out of it? What was that like? How did you respond to this outcome?

Focus on Justice

From the Irish Jesuits: It is next to impossible for the rich man to enter the kingdom of God, says Jesus. It would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. (It is said that Jesus was referring to a narrow entrance in the city wall of Jerusalem called the 'eye of the needle'. In either case, Jesus is indicating something which is extremely difficult, in fact, next to impossible.)

Some of us may feel slightly uncomfortable about this. Even if we are not rich ourselves, we might like to see our children get rich some day or we admire people who have, by their hard work, become wealthy. What is wrong with having a lot of money which one has earned by the one's own sweat and labour?

To be rich here means to have a large surplus of money and possessions while around one are people who do not have what they need to live a life of dignity. How can I continue to hold on to "my" possessions when such a situation prevails? How can I claim to belong to the kingdom, the reign of God, which is a kingdom of love and justice? "I was hungry and thirsty and sick and in prison" and you did not give me to eat or drink, you did not visit me or show any compassion. Instead, you piled up all that money in the bank, or you splurged it on BMWs and fancy restaurants and expensive clothes.

To be rich in the Gospel means refusing to share what you have with those who have not. As long as you behave like that, you cannot be eligible for the Kingdom. It really is like trying to get a camel through the eye of a needle. There is a radical incompatibility. The disciples were quite amazed at Jesus' words. They were thinking along lines traditional to their culture and their religion. Wealth was a sign of God's blessings; poverty and sickness a sign of his punishment. But Jesus turns this tradition upside down.

It was something the young man could not understand either. He was under the impression that his wealth was a grace, a sign of God's favour. The idea of giving alms was to be highly commended but to share his wealth with the poor and create a more just playing field seemed to make no sense.

Then Peter, the optimist, begins to see the bright side. "What about us? We have left everything and followed you." Jesus gives a twofold reply. As the leaders of the new community and people who have generously put their whole security in Jesus, his disciples will be especially rewarded. And indeed everyone who leaves family and goods for Jesus' sake will be rewarded many times over with father, mother, brothers, sisters, goods. This is not just a pie-in-the-sky promise. It is one that can be realised and, in many parts of the world, it is. When everyone works for the good of the other, everyone benefits. The wealth-is-good world believes that it is every man for himself. There is only a limited amount of the cake and it is up to each one to get as big a piece as he can. Too bad about the losers.

In the world of Jesus, everyone gets because everyone gives; because everyone gives, everyone receives. It is not a 'gimme' world; it is a reaching out to others world. And when everyone reaches out, everyone is benefiting. In such a world, I do not have to worry about a roof over my head, or about brothers and sisters, or property or security. It is the realisation of "From each according to his ability; to each according to his need." It is where love and justice meet. For too many people in our world, there is neither love nor justice. If the rich man had liberated himself from his wealth and shared it with the poor and become a follower of Jesus in the new community, he might never have been rich again but he would have had all his needs attended to. - (www.sacredspace.ie)

Questions:

In what circumstances have you witnessed, or been a part of, the “every man for himself” kind of world? What was this like?

When have you witnessed, or been a part of, the “everyone receives” world that Jesus is showing us? What was this like? How did it feel?

Saint Profile -- St. Irmã Dulce Lopes Pontes (Brazilian Franciscan Sister, 1914-1992)

“The important thing is to do charity, not to talk about charity. We must understand the work with very poor people as God’s chosen mission.”—St. Irmã Dulce Lopes Pontes

She was just 13 the day her aunt took her into some of the poorer neighborhoods in her hometown of Salvador, Brazil. A good share of the population lived in slums known as favelas, often without the basic necessities of food, sanitation, shelter, and clothing. Some of us see similar images on a regular basis, on the news or in our own cities and neighborhoods.

Grime, disease, and all the other aspects of poverty make us uncomfortable. We may express sorrow or indignation when we talk with our friends; give a bit more money to a diocesan or nonprofit appeal as a result; or offer up prayers. But prayers go only so far when you haven’t had a decent meal for three days, or your mother has a cough that’s just not getting better. Even though she was just 13, Maria did more than pray. She sprang into action. We admire missionaries like her who bring the Lord to the sick, the dying, and the poor. But emulating them seems much harder. We have parents and spouses and children and grandchildren to care for. We have jobs that eat up a good share of our days and brains. It’s just not feasible for most of us to leave all that behind. But like Dulce, we can be present to the person in front of us, whether that person is a family member, a friend, a colleague, or someone we’ll never see again. Sometimes that assistance will involve services or money; many times it’s about a hug or a smile or a word or small act of kindness.

—from [Radical Saints: 21 Women for the 21st Century](#), by Melanie Rigney, Franciscan Media

From Dorothy Day:

“I really only love God as much as the person I love least.”

From St. Ignatius:

“Love consists in sharing what one has, and what one is with those one loves.” (Sp. Exercise No 231)