

## The Twenty Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time-B

Mark 10:17-30

Dear Friends,

Right after my ordination, my best friend brought me a big problem. He was sure I had the answer after all the years of study in the seminary. His sister had left the Church to join an Evangelical group. It broke his heart. He was convinced I could bring her back to the Church. I failed and for years he never let me forget it.

One of the main reasons I failed is that the theology that I had studied in the pre-Vatican II days gave little emphasis to Scripture and to a personal relationship to Jesus. This was her main attraction to the Evangelicals.

Since Vatican II, we have been invited to see the main task of the Church as evangelization. We need to continually recall that the heart of our faith will always be the same: the God who revealed his immense love in the crucified and risen Christ. All evangelization is about the call to have a personal relationship with Jesus. This comes first before all the other catechesis and study. We need a personal encounter with Jesus that touches us at the deepest part of our being.

In today's Gospel story of the rich man, Jesus is inviting the man to focus his attention not so much on what he has to do, but to realize the goodness and generosity of God. The text has the incredibly beautiful statement, ***"Jesus, looking at him, loved him."* (Mk 10:21)** The man did not see this love nor did he experience it because he was caught up in his riches that Jesus asked him to put aside. ***"At that statement he went away sad, for he had many possessions."* (Mk 10:22)**

What were his possessions? Not a car, maybe a donkey or two. If he was really rich, a horse. Two or three robes at best but K-Mart was wildly beyond his wardrobe dreams. No doctor, no medicine. Probably he could not read or write, and no TV, movies or newspaper not to mention a cell phone. You can continue the list. For these pitifully few things that he thought made him rich, he was unable to let go to follow Jesus. It is a good mirror for us.

We will do the same if we do not realize we are loved. This is why we have to start out with a personal relationship with Jesus first and foremost. Without love, we too will walk away with the illusion of our wealth as our real security. However, if we open our heart to Jesus, we can begin the journey of gradually realizing that all our riches are in Jesus. Jesus is always looking at us and loving us also. In the end, all else will pass away, but Jesus' love will never change.