

Mk 10:17-30; Wis 7:7-11; Heb 4:12-13 Die and Rise with Jesus

It's not good enough just to follow the Ten Commandments. Jesus said: *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* (Mk 10:21).

But the young man went away sad, *for he had many possessions* (Mk 10:22).

Does that mean having money, being wealthy or owning possessions is bad? Should you sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and then you become a burden on society?

No. The problem is when your money, your wealth, or your possessions begin to own you. Like St. Paul said, "The love of money is the root of all evils."

[Why?] because when you crave it...God is no longer the most important thing in your life (1 Tm 6:10). Sure...you may still keep loving God. But you will stop loving your neighbor with the self-giving love that Jesus demands from you.

Jesus said "follow me." That is the answer. That is what you need to inherit eternal life...follow Jesus. That means become detached from everything else...so Jesus always comes first. It means give yourself completely to God.

And live a life of self-giving love--like He did for us on that cross. Use everything God has given you...your money, your possessions, your time and your treasure to love and serve your brothers and sisters. Share what you have with others.

I think you already know that. Then what are you going to say when someone asks you: *what must I do to inherit eternal life?* Keep it simple. Remind them of two things: (1) the Paschal Mystery and (2) the Mystery of Divine Presence.

(1) The Paschal Mystery is that Jesus died and rose from the dead for our salvation. And, we are called to follow Him.

We are called to make the choice every day—to die to our selfish ways and rise to a new life in Christ—a life of loving, caring, and forgiving.

And when we do that...that will transform us—we will become like Jesus Christ. And we will share in the wisdom of God. Because the wisdom of God is Christ crucified (1 Cor 1:23-24).

The first reading showed us how to do that: first pray for it and then live it.

King Solomon prayed for the paschal mystery when he asked God for wisdom (1 Kgs 3:9).

And when God gave him wisdom, he lived the paschal mystery because he preferred wisdom to *scepter and throne* (power), to *riches* (wealth), and to *any priceless gem* (pleasure) (Wis 7:8-9).

But we do not have to do it alone. We are called to live the paschal mystery together with Jesus. We call that the divine presence.

(2) The mystery of Divine Presence is that God is always present to us in Jesus. Jesus is always present to us when we pray, when we go to confession, in other people, and especially in the Holy Eucharist.

In the second reading we heard that the Word of God (Jesus) knows the most secret thoughts of our hearts (Heb 4:12) and nothing is hidden from Him (Heb 4:13). So God is always present with us even when it doesn't feel like it.

We saw that on the cross. Jesus was betrayed, denied and abandoned by his disciples. He hung on the cross as a man condemned by God (Dt. 21:23). And as He bore all our sins...in his humanity, He must have felt completely abandoned by God.

But as the heavens and earth waited in darkness...the light shined in the darkness. Jesus cried out: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Mt 27:46). That was a plea for God's mercy—even when He felt abandoned by God.

That was God's victory. And God who was always with Him raised Him from the dead so He is now seated at the right hand of the Father where His kingdom will have no end.

I'd like to share a story with you.¹ John and Dorothy had been married 38 years when she died after a long struggle with cancer. It left John in a deep depression.

A friend invited him on a retreat. The speaker talked about the paschal mystery—about how Christ lived and died with a self-giving love. And, that there is a call embedded in everyday life for each of us to do that.

The speaker told us we would all be called in some way in our daily lives—and invited to give of ourselves and empty ourselves for the sake of someone else.

[And] if we do enter into it and practice self-giving love, lo and behold, we will find...that Jesus is walking with us in friendship...and that his grace would comfort and console us.

Then a crucifix was passed around to each person...and when it finally came around to me...I just held that crucifix and looked at Jesus, and then I told them about Dorothy and all...the sadness.

And then I suddenly realized, that was my call. I didn't see it at the time, but within her illness was embedded a summons for me: the chance to really love her. I realized that Dorothy may have died, but before she did she saved me.

And then—this is the most remarkable part of it all—when we were at mass that evening sitting quietly after Communion, I felt His presence, Jesus' presence, with me.

I heard him tell me that he knew how much I suffered, that he understood about the loneliness...and that [all along he had always been] with me.

So that will be your message: we have to die and rise to a new life and we have to do it together with Jesus Christ.

¹ Bill Huebsch. *Promise and Hope: Pastoral Theology in the Age of Mercy: Discerning and Becoming a Parish of Accompaniment*. (Twenty-third Publications New London, CT 2020).