

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, October 14th, 2018

Who Am I, Lord?

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Wisdom 7:7-11

Hebrews 4:12-13

Mark 10:17-30



In a poignant 1991 movie scene from “City Slickers,” Curly (a rugged cowboy played by Jack Palance) is having a deep conversation with Mitch (a middle-aged businessman played by Billy Crystal) about the deeper meaning of life. Curly holds up his gloved-hand, with index finger raised, and says, “The secret of life is about one thing.” “What’s the one thing?” asks Mitch. “Well, that’s what you have to figure out.”

I remember that scene because it struck a chord within me when I was a teen: what am I living for? Today, when I look around at the world for examples of what people are living for, I see the breakdown of the family unit and traditions in the name of progress and individualism. I see deceitful hearts disguised behind friendly handshakes. I see a growing global community through technological advancement that makes people feel more lonely and disconnected from authentic human relationships. I see greed dictating commerce, not justice. I see well-crafted political rhetoric that does not lead to the goal that the well-applauded rhetoric described. I see a growing disillusionment and distrust of organized religion as scandal is discovered at all levels of hierarchical structures across denominational lines. I see a formative aspect of the entertainment industry that champions anti-Christian philosophies. The list can go on, and it all seems rather dismal to me at times.

What hope can Christianity give us in the face of an overwhelming tide of post-modern secularism?

Like so many of us, I’ve done all the Catholic things from my youth, and yet it seems not to have amounted to much. Enter Curly’s gloved-finger and the one thing. We — you and I — probably lack one thing. Jesus clearly said it to the rich young man. What is it that we lack? You’re probably thinking, “We haven’t sold our possessions and given to the poor because I’m not in a position to ... I have a wife and children ... I have a medical practice ... I’m still in school ...” Yes. True enough. But perhaps today’s first reading gives us another perspective to consider in answer to the question of a Christian response to the current social climate.

“I prayed ...”

Sure, we hurriedly say grace before our meals, we slide into the pew seconds before the entrance song starts, we fumble through rapid-fire

rosaries, we merely glance at the dust-laden bible on the coffee table, we go through mechanical responses to our favorite worship tunes, we hurriedly thumb through the Divine Office on our phone. But have we really prayed? Have we really ever been taught to seek a deeper experience of prayer beyond the techniques of the rote recitation of prayer texts? Has our heart really met Jesus' heart in our prayer times?

Prayer is the language of one who is seeking not the ephemeral satisfaction of the corporeal nor the intellectual, but rather the joy of the spiritual and a foretaste of the eternal. The quality of our prayer is not measured by the quantity of time or the elegance of our words, but rather by the depth of the interpersonal exchange that occurs. In other words, prayer comes from the depths of one's heart in gratitude or need, during times of trial or temptation, in seasons of prosperity or scarcity.

Let me paraphrase what St. Gregory of Nyssa said, that "prayer is the heart-to-heart talk with the Triune God." The vibrancy of prayer — be it liturgical or personal — is not seen in the disappearance of evil in the world, but rather in the fuller display of the divine image within each one of us that was stamped on the day of our Baptism and Confirmation ... the light that conquers the dark. This prayer life does not mean that we are irresponsible of the many tasks that require our attention throughout the day. But it does mean that we assume those responsibilities with the heart and mind of Christ if we hope to make a lasting and positive impact around those who know.

So where are you in the discovery of your "one thing" that you lack today? Maybe you can try praying the way St. Gregory describes it. And when you've discovered it, everything changes ... for the first time or the 101st time.

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PRAYER

Precious Father,
Precious Lord Jesus,
Wonderful Holy Spirit,
I give you thanksgiving praise, honor, and glory for all things good and great in my life and in the world today. Sometimes I think I know all about me. Sometimes I think I know why I think and do what I think and do. However, every time I think I know myself, I find out I do not know much at all. In your love and in your will, help me know more about myself. Teach me when I need to know more about myself, when I need to know more about you. Fill my heart with your love so I will begin to see you as you really are... a being of love who died to set me free. Show me how you formed me and made me. Show me how I can be more like the love-made person you want me to be. In the name of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit who lives within me and touches me, Amen.