

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
The Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 13, 2024

What Must I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

In 1979, during his first pastoral visit to the United States, St. Pope John Paul II addressed young people gathered in Madison Square Garden with a message that is the essence of our faith and one that should deeply resonate in our hearts. He urged those young people to seek the fullness of life, to aim high, and to set their hearts on the things that truly matter. He knew that deep within each of us lies a yearning to understand the meaning of life, a desire to find our purpose, and ultimately, to know how we might attain eternal life.

In today's Gospel, we encounter a man who shares this very yearning. He approaches Jesus with a question that echoes through the ages: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" This man, often interpreted to be young and wealthy, represents each one of us in our quest for meaning and fulfillment. Despite his material success, he recognizes that something is still missing in his life, prompting him to seek answers from the one he believes has the key to eternal life. Jesus's response is both compassionate and challenging. He first acknowledges the man's observance of the commandments, affirming the importance of living a moral life. Then, he looks at the man with love and invites him to take the next step—a radical step. "Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." Yes, this call to discipleship demands a complete reorientation of priorities. Jesus is not merely asking this man to give up his wealth; he is asking him to let go of anything that stands in the way of fully following God. It's a call to embrace life where love of God and love of neighbor take precedence over material possessions, social status, or personal ambitions.

For many of us, this call can feel daunting because often we may find ourselves clinging to the things that give us a sense of security or identity. We might be hesitant to surrender our comforts, our plans, or our wealth, fearing the uncertainty that comes with letting go. But Jesus's message is clear: to inherit eternal life, we must be willing to let go of anything that holds us back from fully embracing the kingdom of God. St. Pope John Paul II understood that true discipleship requires more than a superficial adherence to religious practices; it requires a profound transformation of the heart that allows us to find true freedom and joy, even in the midst of sacrifice. As we reflect on today's Gospel, let us ask ourselves: What are the things that we cling to, the things that prevent us from fully following Jesus? Are we willing to trust in God's promise, to let go of our earthly treasures, and to seek the eternal treasure that comes from a life lived in love and service?

The young man in the Gospel went away sad because he couldn't make that leap of faith. But we have the opportunity today to choose differently. By reorienting our priorities and placing God at the center of our lives, we can find fullness of life—a life that leads us to the eternal joy of God's kingdom. Let us pray for the courage to seek and find this path.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy