

Something to Live For Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time/B 10:45 AM
October 11, 2015 Wis 7:7-11; Heb 4:12-13; **Mk 10:17-30** (God's warmth and light slowly builds up within a heart that places God first and tries to find God in all things and all people.)

“Then come, follow me.”

Allowing for cultural and gender differences, **the rich young man in today's story is really each of us**, especially the young, but not exclusively, because sooner or later **a reasonable person must ask the question: Who am I and what am I going to do with my life?** Hopefully this happens sooner rather than later, but sometimes it may occur more than once. This is the basis of the so-called “mid-life crisis.” **The midlife crisis is that a decision made early on, which may be perfectly legitimate then, doesn't continue to give life and meaning as time goes on.**

This was the case of my mother. She married in 1947 and immediately with my father began a family. Her last child was born in 1963. By the time my sister was headed off to college, my mother had a crisis. She came to me one day and she said, “Well, now what am I supposed to do?” Her whole life had been being a mother caring for children, and now the last one was gone and the house was empty. Some people like that; my mother didn't. She didn't even like us to go to school in the fall. She loved children and when children were gone, she was really bereft.

She had to search for meaning because **we need meaning in life. We need a mission.** The evangelist says that after Jesus commissioned his disciples to go forth and to preach to the four corners of the world, he says, “Strengthened by this mission, they went forth.” Strengthened by this mission, not for this mission—by this mission. **A mission gives us something to live for. It gives us strength.** The sad fact is that the founder of sociology, the study of people, said that one of the sad characteristics of modern society is that so many people are aimless; they never quite find meaning; they don't find a reason to live. And as you all know by now or will soon find out, a job is not a reason to live. So this is what the gospel is about. **What are we going to live for?**

Now this young man had a praiseworthy characteristic because he was not one of those people that just tries to get along in life. He had followed the commandments. He was a good and devoted Jew, but this wasn't enough. He wanted something more. He wanted some kind of vitality. **He wanted some kind of strength in himself**, something vibrant, something life-giving. And Jesus saw that in him. However, the negative side of his character was that **he was apparently attached to his social status**, and that can happen. **We can become attached to various things, and Jesus saw that and wanted to free him.** So he said, “Look, go and sell everything; and then come, follow me.” The evangelist doesn't tell us what happened to this young man because it doesn't matter.

What matters is how we take it: What happens to us? **What are we going to do with this invitation?** Do we see our own energy and our resources compromised by too many conflicting desires? There are many goods in life, many good things, many good aims, many

good goals. We can't have them all. We are supposed to enjoy life. God made it good. We are supposed to appreciate beauty in nature and in the accomplishments of humanity. Why not? But **sometimes what we accomplish, what we succeed at doing, what we acquire can become a burden.** Sometimes our accomplishments and our acquisitions and our possessions and our successes own us. **They possess us, and then it's best to get rid of them.** The constant witness of the saints has been one of **simplicity of life.** Recently Pope Francis addressed Congress, and he brought up four great Americans: Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, and Thomas Merton. All four were very vibrant people. All four dedicated their lives to the service of others. All four left behind a world much better because they were here, but they all lived a very simple life.

Our parish theme is related to this. **Our hearts can be on fire if God is the chief desire we have.** If something else gets in there between us and God, then our hearts will not be on fire and, sadly, we will go away sad, and we will not be able to follow Christ. **God's warmth and light slowly builds up within a heart that places God first and tries to find God in all things and all people.** What Jesus was trying to do to this young inquirer was to wean him away from his natural self-interests and show him **the joy that God gives those who serve others,** who dedicate themselves to the love of others, **in conjunction with of course God and God's plans and providence and work and kingdom.** In no way was Jesus suggesting that this man withdraw from society or from life or from people—not at all. He wanted him more involved.

So how can we become more involved in God's work? Well, our parish provides many opportunities for spiritual enrichment, marriage enrichment, prayer and quiet, activity in service, and witness. **The bulletin is absolutely laden with suggestions.** If none of those suit you, make up something else. Like the rich young man all of us at times need to switch gears in order to actually properly care for ourselves. That's what this is actually about. It's about **properly caring for ourselves and, therefore, getting the optimum out of the opportunities that life provides.**