

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, October 10, 2021
28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle B

Today's Gospel gives us a framework to better understand the nature of divine love and inclusion in God's kingdom. A man comes up to Jesus and asks Him what must be done to inherit eternal life. Jesus answered about the need to follow the commandments. The man claimed that he has done so since childhood. Then Jesus proposed that something more needs to be done: "Go, sell anything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me". And the man went away sad, knowing he cannot follow Jesus for he has plenty of possessions and he was possessed by them.

Even with the man's slavery to his wealth, the Gospel says, "Jesus looked at him and loved him". This is so reassuring – we are loved! But there is another thing we need to learn from this episode in the Gospel. The unconditional love of God does not mean the unconditional approval of God. Let this sink in for a moment for this is where we most need clarification. It is easy to confuse the love of God with His approval.

When the man approached Jesus and expressed his desire to gain eternal life, Jesus did not say, "Oh silly you! I love you, relax and just sit back. Eternal life is yours". No, Jesus said, "You know the commandments" and then He went on to enumerate the several "Thou shall nots" of the Ten Commandments. What was Jesus saying? If we want to share in the life of God, there are some things we need to avoid doing and need to let go of the sins and attachments that hinder us in following the Lord.

Yes, Jesus embraced sinners and prostitutes in the Scriptures, but with that embrace is a clear and stern admonition: "Go and sin no more". When the rich young man went away sad and refused Jesus' invitation, Jesus did not love him less. But he did go away without Jesus' approval.

Parents know this. They love their children unconditionally. I believe there is nothing that a child can do that will make a parent love the child any less. But no responsible parent,

even as they love their children, will approved of their children when they are clearly in the wrong.

As Christians we should always remember that there are actions that are incompatible with the holiness of God. This is why they are given as commandments, not suggestions. And like the young man in our Gospel, God has given us the freedom to embrace or reject it. The choice is always ours. But are we making the right choice in order for us to inherit eternal life?

Amen