

# Sunday Homily

## 28th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

10 OCTOBER 2021

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK IV

"Everything is possible for God."

### Illustration

A young student was talking to a group from the West about his experiences behind the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe when the Church was still very much underground. He shared with them how the community took great risks to meet in quiet places to celebrate the Eucharist. If they had been found out, life would have been very difficult, if not impossible. Yet somehow they had come through it and supported each other.

A listener suggested that things must have changed now that the churches have been given back and people are free to meet. The young man agreed he was thankful that the old totalitarian regimes had gone. But he added that in a strange sort of way they had also lost something: the something that comes when we don't carry any extra baggage, when following Jesus means simply that we share our lives with others in his name.

### Gospel Teaching

The man who seeks out Jesus in today's Gospel obviously makes an impression on the disciples. What is it that makes him so memorable? He's wealthy and also a man of some standing. If he were to join their number it might bring them a degree of security and respectability. He is genuinely seeking the truth about himself and about life, and approaches Jesus with a confidence that could be taken for arrogance. He is an observant and practising Jew, but hungers after something more.

He is looking for an insight into Jesus and the kingdom, but is offered much more than he bargained for. With a look of love, Jesus shows him how to be free. A whole life is reflected in those eyes. For the would-be disciple, wealth is tied up with belonging to the right family, being entitled to some precious land and, perhaps more importantly, being accepted in society as someone of worth. He is offered both a challenge and a question.

The challenge is to drop the false image that he hides behind, move beyond himself and enter into a new and personal relationship with Christ. The challenge is to step away from the easy certainties that come with status and privilege; to let go of the things that define his life, moving from the mere practice of religion into a new and vibrant faith where God can make all things possible for him. The challenge is to share his life with others.

The question is whether he is willing to accept that he is vulnerable; whether he can acknowledge that he can't find all the answers on his own; whether he can enter into a time of searching, depending on others to help rebuild his life in this kingdom, where everything is turned around and made new.

What makes this meeting unique is that he departs from the gaze of Jesus sad. There are many reactions towards Jesus, but people don't usually leave dejected. The man cannot find it within him to openly admit that he is weak. He returns to his possessions and status, the false image that now imprisons him, the baggage that holds him back.

### Application

We don't know how his story ends, but perhaps we should not be worried about one whom Christ loved so much. We do know that the Word of God, who is Jesus, helped the enquirer to meet his real self just as he can help us to see ourselves in the clear light of day. The true knowledge, sought after by the author of the book of Wisdom, comes in the encounter with the Word of God. This is not always a comfortable experience. Getting close to Jesus means getting close to others, examining our own motives. This can change us. As we gather around God's table together, let's drop our pretences and bring our true selves to God.

It is difficult for us to give up what holds us back, but that is what we are called to do in this new kingdom. We are called from fear and isolation, into community; from conformity and simple observance into a new life together. Just like Mark's young, persecuted Church, the young student from the East found true community and strength even in the face of hostility. Let's remember that it is not the splendour of our buildings, nor the accuracy of our doctrines, that makes us powerful: it's our reliance on God's word and on each other, helping to build the kingdom out of our weakness and God's strength. For nothing is impossible to God.