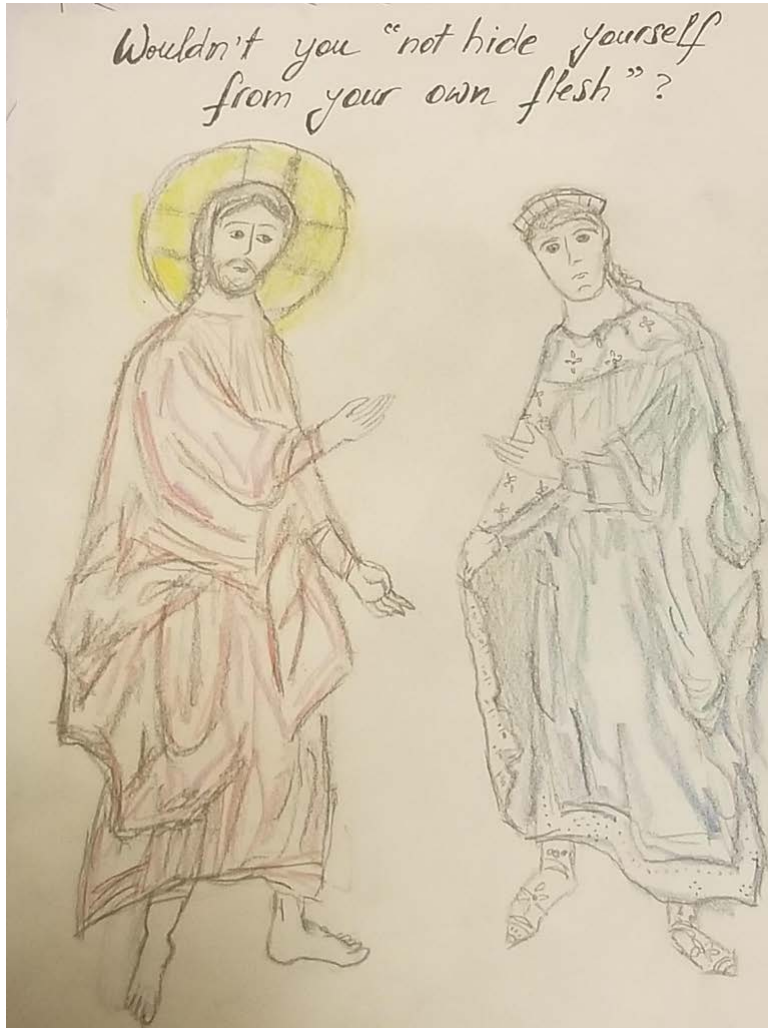


13th Sunday of Luke
The Gospel According to Luke 18:18-27

"Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you still lack... Mark10:
23



The anguish of the young rich man is the unnecessary inherited burden. It is the anguish of a very rich generation who leaves behind to the following one a very sorrowful heart. The gospel today is not a parable. Not that the parable would not speak about the Truth manifested among us. On the contrary, it is the language of today that reaches us into the depths of our being, even when we are asleep or not listening. The gospel today though speaks directly to the generation that likes

facts. The evidence based on facts. Jesus met with the young man. Just before going towards Jerusalem. A few verses after the encounter with the young man, Jesus speaks to the apostles about the cross that was waiting for him. Jesus invites the young man to walk with Him. Here and now. It is an invitation within the present. It is not an invitation in principle that gives us time to ponder. Either you come now or you don't. There is honesty in the love of Jesus for the young man and there is honesty in the invitation. Jesus did not receive much comfort on the way of the cross. Yet, He invites the young man now to come with him. It is so hard to listen to the gospel because you cannot really go further from this separation of the young man from God. God goes towards the cross, the young are buried within their riches, while despairing for being left behind. They both love each other. We see here the young person who unceasingly looked to fulfill the commandments. As we hear in the psalms. It is the commandments that corrected his way. It was like honey for his mouth and like clear water for his thirsty soul. Jesus goes towards the cross, leaving behind the innocence of the young man who cannot go beyond the riches which he inherited. He leaves behind the young one who just lost his innocence.

It is, again, hard to see how the deep desire of the young human soul and the desire of God to receive him and to walk with him is rejected because of the riches that piled up. Again, the invitation for him was a concrete one. A young spirit who could have walked with Jesus and who could have maybe brought Him comfort. He could have stayed by the Cross, alongside His mother and the apostle John. They would have both been close in age (as one would speculate) and foolish enough not to see all the angles.

The young man does not ask Jesus about salvation thinking he could not follow Him; and Jesus does not invite the young man thinking that he would refuse. There is a genuine interest. There is a knowing of each other. And yet, it is the riches that get in the way so "the young men would perish".

It is the riches of this world that change the desire of the young heart, turning it into despair, that ends up sacrificing itself. We can see a little bit here as well why the path of the cross is the only one. When there is an honest desire from man and an honest invitation from God for the encounter to become permanent, something gets in the way. The same gulf. The riches that cultivate secret places where evil could slay the innocence of the heart. Christ can reach to them and to us only through the tomb. The eye of the needle, the narrow gate that embraces our incomprehensible ego.

Ps 9 : 25 - 28

The sinner hath provoked the Lord; according to the multitude of his wrath, he careth not; God is not before him.

He sitteth in ambush with the rich in secret places, that he may slay the innocent. His eyes are set upon the poor man.

Because of the riches in this part of the world many youth are refused here and now a simple life. Only to have their desire fulfilled within the encounter of the Resurrection.



The generation in which our youth are growing today is a rich one. On this side of the border. A heavy burden is on their shoulders. Unnecessary and soul destroying. A burden that carouses your senses and kills your future. A burden that poisons you with the pestilence of goals accomplished by those who left behind no name. A burden where illusory gates take you to nowhere. Just to crush your heart and keep you captive. A generation that fed their youngsters with honey so much so that they lost the taste of the salt and of bread. A generation that turned wine into water and emptied the bread of its own texture. A wonder that is lasting less than a bubble of soap. A burden that puts ahead of you no hope. You would not know today what a young person should study or should do. They can become queens and kings, as they deserve indeed, but with so much sorrow in their hearts that no encounter would bring them joy. It is so because the ideals of this world are scraping on the pure desire of a young person to be alive. Riches, many in number, but with no names. Let's start with money and continue with knowledge and skill. And abilities and travels without borders. And everything else this world can imagine and produce. But all this at the end would make you captive because your heart remains insatiable. It leaves you with no desire to live, bringing heaviness and despair. Something happened after the encounter with the rich young man, shortly before the resurrection. Imagine him going back home with the remembrance of meeting Jesus and abandoning Him on His way to the cross. Unnecessary guilt. Because his desire was pure. How would a young ruler

lead his "flock", when his soul is sorrowful and eaten up by guilt? Where would he lead his people if he himself did not follow Him? The prayer here reveals us the truth, that the encounter with Jesus is not consumed by time or by sorrow. It prepares you for the resurrection by dwelling on hope. It makes a breach within these riches so they would be thrown into the sea. The desire of the young generation to be with God is pure and unblemished. The youth should always dwell on it. They should always leave behind the sins of the world and find a place to rest and ponder. There is a place within their conscience where they can rest and find what they are looking for. The riches teach you to settle for cheap because they cannot buy "real gold". It is the simplicity and prayer that bring you back the real desire. They bring them under the fig tree to find the silence they did not even know existed and for which their souls mourned without a cause. It was there but they did not know it.

Ps 118: 9

Wherewithal shall a young man correct his way? By keeping Thy words.

With my whole heart have I sought after Thee, cast me not away from thy commandments.

The way of Thy commandments have I run, when Thou didst enlarge my heart.

Set before me for a law, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I will seek after it continually.

For St Anthony, hearing today's gospel was enough. Enough said. Just enough to make him give everything to the poor and to follow Christ. He was young when he heard it. We know more or less what happened with him. However, we know his prayer and his never ending battle. For the young generation, since they like to be original and might not want to follow familiar paths, they could try to ask God to come to them. There is a place on earth that gives you this privilege. The privilege of simplicity and poverty, if we trust Isaiah. Especially when they deeply desire to fast from the riches poured down on them:

Please read carefully and distribute the "illegal" text below in silence and peace, to all those who have sorrow in their heart. Any sorrow would do.

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen:

To lose the bonds of the wickedness,

To undo the heavy burdens,

To let the oppressed go free,

And that you break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,

And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;

When you see the naked, that you cover him,

And not hide yourself from your own flesh?

Then your light shall break forth like the morning,

Your healing shall spring forth speedily,

And your righteousness shall go forth before you;

The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;

You will cry, and He will say. "Here I am."

Isaiah 58:6-9.

Antiphon I. Mode pl. 4.

From my youth does the enemy tempt me, and with the pleasures he scorches me. But trusting You, O Lord, monumentally do I defeat him.

Being young teaches your conscience that there is no stumbling block that can stop you. Your spirit searches back and forth all the depths of existence, being many times at risk to be harmed by those who hide in riches. And yet, there is only Christ that can take you to the path that never consumes itself, changing every moment into something new and unseen before. Because of the veracity of the Truth that creation and life do not repeat themselves, and you are becoming already a part of it, a young soul matures when he learns to lose the goods he inherited. Some bad, others good, others very bad, others very good. Both gifts and habits. The mature soul learns to leave behind everything that is needed. And with every loss he becomes lighter and lighter. Like an old balloon that loses its cargo without being afraid of being carried too high by the spirit. The holy Spirit that reveals to the soul that it is not within itself anymore.



A homeless unknown artist at

From Psalm 113

***At the presence of the Lord the earth was shaken, at the presence of the God of Jacob,
Who turneth the rock into the pools of waters, and the precipice into the fountains of waters.***

We have spoken and written about him before in our reflections. He is the homeless native man who lives in solitude. He rarely speaks a word. Only if you insist, and even then you have to pay careful attention to understand what he says. Br Luke wrote recently about him. He is an original, creative and artistic spirit. He finds different things on the street and he creates something out of

them: from wires and lights to paper and glass. He combines them in different ways to show you beauty. There is no exaggeration. If you take time to stay with him for a few minutes he will show you something new every time. I think that, in different circumstances, he could have probably become a well known artist who, because of too much fame and recognition, would have ended up hating his own soul. But thanks to the current circumstances, he sees beauty and he gives it shape and rejoices like a child, sharing it with others only because he does not want to delight in it by himself. This is something that is rarely seen in artistic people. Just to share what they see for the sake of the beauty and truth, with no trace of one's own personal possession. There is no private property when it comes to the beauty that H sees or "creates". He really is happy he discovered it and then he shows it to you.

On Thursday morning I asked him what he had been working on. He took some time to answer, but then he replied: "The encounter between the rain and the sea". I thought I misunderstood and I asked him again. He explained: "When rain touches the sea, you know: the encounter." It was clear for him I hadn't understood, so he showed me what he meant. He took out of his pocket a drawing book that was carefully tucked inside a sock. He ripped a few pages and started to work on it. He folded and ripped the paper, first making a circle, then a semicircle, which he put on top of the circle. Underneath both of them he put another piece of paper. At the end he suddenly folded everything into a paper ball. "Hold out your hand" he told me. He put the paper in my hand saying, "You see, the sea is inside the rain and the rain is inside the ball". I replied: "It is really beautiful H. Can I keep the ball?" He took it back saying "No, it is enough for you to see."

For those who do not know H it is important to realize that, in what he said and did, he acted like a child who was playing for real, with the gravity of a free, pure, homeless spirit.

Antiphon IV.

Behold, what is so good or so delightful as for brothers to reside together? For in this has the Lord promised life everlasting He who so adorns the lilies of the field commands not to be concerned about one's own raiment.

Another short story from this past Thursday. It is about K, who is like a small poor ruler among his three housemates. They are all on welfare or ODSP, living in subsidized housing. Every Saturday, K goes to St. Ann's food bank and he gets groceries for him and his roommates. "It is really good", he says. "They give you a lot of food for four people. You can cook for three days probably. We eat together." "Who does the cooking?", I ask.

"I do, K replies, but I am not a good cook."

The rest of the days he comes to the mission to eat and take some food home for one of his house mates, a sick older woman whom he makes sure is well fed and cared for.

He told me once, longer ago, how he can make chicken soup with only a few dollars. He gets chicken bones in Chinatown for a couple of dollars and boils them to make soup. He brings the groceries, he prepares the food and he takes care of those in the house. He does not think highly of himself, even though in his own country he could have practiced a form of medical profession. He travelled so far only to get stuck in Canada, where he broke his leg while helping a friend to do some work. I asked him where he felt his home was. Here in Canada or in his home country. I

knew he had a hard time here in Canada. "Nowhere. I have no place to go. I have no home", he replied. He said it with no regret or anger, only with certitude of his own smile.

I thought K is unlike the young poor ruler who knows how to take good care of the people that surround him without sorrow in his heart. Because he is poor, he has no country of his own and also because he does not settle in the good life he has. I mean he does not settle even in the beautiful witness he gives to us. Of his life. He is light when he works and when he speaks. He has a lifted heart because, with his broken leg, he is walking on the path without asking Christ how to inherit eternal life. Because he already looks like a free satisfied spirit who did not lose his sense of humor.

"What are you doing for Christmas K?", I asked. "We are watching TV. All day. We are eating and watching TV", he replied laughing. "We just argue for the channels. I want Chinese, they want English", he continued.

An innocent question (while looking at the first drawing):

Why would you wear a crown if you meet Christ when His head is never covered?

Could a king with a crown on his head enter the narrow gate? Or would it get knocked down from his head by the upper door sill?

It is like sleeping in your own bed when the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.