

13th Gospel Luke 10:25-37

... *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* “

An ongoing search of the human heart is revealed today in the gospel. There is no rest for the soul until it is told to her:

I was glad when they said unto me: Let us go into the house of the Lord. (Ps 122:1) But who can go there? “He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.” (Ps 15 – see fr. Roberto’s reflection on Tuesdays)



That’s why Jesus says (Wednesday gospel) : *Let the little children come to me, for such is the kingdom of God (Lk 18:16)*. And the children entered therein. The mother of God entered the temple when she was 3 years old. As she looked at the candles burning in front of her, who point to the Holy of Holies, she did not turn back to search for the love of her parents, out of fear. Love does not hold her back but rather accompanies her until it becomes complete within the Holy of Holies.

The week was rich in the scripture and liturgical prayer, when it comes to the walk of life and to the encounter that is prepared for us within the house, “the mountain of the Lord” prepared for those who are humble of heart. And so was the week in action. Every person we entered in a dialogue with reveals this search and its journey.

On Thursday, a homeless brother was sharing his experience of having recently ended up on the streets because he had relapsed, after a very long time, and the recovery place where he lived had zero tolerance for this kind of behavior. He understands that, but the two nights on the streets were hard for him. For his hands and his feet. The overnight rain had soaked his clothes. “It is hard to find a place to sleep at night, to take shelter from the rain. They have security everywhere now. They ask you to leave. But I had good news, after 11 years they called me from social housing. They have a place for me. It happened just now, as I lost my place. That gives me hope and helps me to battle through. I see the new home ahead of me”. Somehow, our brother knows that he must leave addictions behind when he enters the new place. Many times, the new place changes into old and vanishes away again. He spent that day with us and Monica helped him bathe his feet with salt water. He could hardly walk.

On Friday, the reflection on the gospel, shifted naturally to the walk that many people had to take. They left behind countries, families, houses and jobs. And now they are poor and vulnerable. They all shared their journey to the church on Broadview Ave, from Bangladesh, Turkey, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, UK, and so on. They all went through the narrow gate and now they are here in church. One of the people said: *"With God everything is possible"*. She underlined it, with a lot of emotion, several times. *"That's what I remember from the gospel today. With God everything is possible."* Is there anything that is not possible with Him? If the people on Friday shared their journey, from leaving everything behind for the sake of new life, the retreat on Wednesday revealed to us the story of the parents who lost their daughter to euthanasia. Is that a journey as well? Is that a search? Why was the daughter asking her mother what time it was? How long did she have left until the time came? How could young people in a rich country search and find death instead of life? Why do we stop walking?

The Theotokos entered the Holy of Holies. She discovered the presence of God in her heart, and she never left that presence behind. But she nurtured the relationship through prayer and the presence kept her heart in purity so she could ponder on the Word of God becoming flesh. Out of her flesh.

How do we follow her and discover the presence that loves us by name in an infinite and personal way? How do we become obedient to the Holy presence, that opens the heart to prayer and makes it attentive to the other with warm kindness? The presence that we look for with tears when it is taken away: *"Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."* (Jn 20:15)

On Friday, George said that all of us try to be good. And somehow, we manage, for better or for worse, to fulfill the commandments. Not to steal and to love your neighbour, to take care of your parents, to love God. George thinks these are easy things to do. Just like father said during Tuesday's talk about St Augustine's commentaries on the psalm 15: these are minimal requirements. And all should be able to accomplish them. However, George thought that we also have one thing that becomes a stumbling block when it comes to follow Jesus. With no restrictions. One thing, that seems impossible to overcome.

The question about following and stumbling is a matter of life and death. We see it unfold today under our own eyes, within the Canadian context, as it is, and in different forms, all over the globe. Where do we go? How perfect are we so that we may keep walking? How healthy are our legs? Can we take a break when we get old or walk with a walking stick? In the scripture, what we see is that people who stumbled often are those who welcome Jesus freely. The sinners, the tax collectors, the prostitutes, the unclean ones, those who have the experience of failing recognize the real hope when it changes into a presence and the presence in a personal genuine love. Those who thought they were moral enough, and accomplished enough, according to the law, had a hard time to recognize God for who God is.

It might be so, because walking with Christ requires an ongoing transformation. We talk often about a change of a heart, but that change comes through the stumbling blocks that ask us to take a U-turn. Because Christ does not go straight to heaven but takes a detour through hell. The walk is a spiral. And every time it requires a change from us. The change has layers, and it makes the walk to happen in humility. It brings us at Christ's level. It is necessary, as somebody who comes to the mission to cut butter says: "It is important to come to the mission". This means it is important to keep walking. Because it is a walk through the door that is Christ and that door opened to us already.

A young person was saying last week that if we do not walk the path, we become stagnant and by doing so, we open ourselves to things that are not necessary and that have the possibility of becoming bad all together. And we end up opening to evil, because we stopped walking to the gate. We thus open a gate to our soul for evil spirits. And then, the soul is very vulnerable not to good but to evil.

There is a volunteer who has been coming to the mission for almost one year. He told me this week that he has in fact been coming for the past eight months, together with his wife. In his own country he used to be a brilliant professor who taught many students physics and mathematics. Frank just shared that he knows one of his students who works as an electrician in Toronto, and he spoke very highly of him. He trained many generations in his country. The professor is kind and calm. He comes to the mission and he cuts butter, sometimes alongside people with various disabilities and other refugees. Somehow, it makes your heart cry, knowing how much he could teach and seeing him humble himself at his age. But this week, when we asked him why he kept coming to the mission, he said: "This place gives me a good spirit. The vibes are good, and it gives me a sense of joy." He said it like a mathematician who figured out the unknown value of a new theory.

It is the place that makes the heart sing for joy but also the humility of his servant who enters it because he humbled himself so much. Humility is not about someone humiliating themselves. At times it could be encountered in that way as well, when the grace of God touches the soul with kindness. But most of the time, it is rather the stature of the walk that is seeing ahead the size of the gate. There is a joy because of the home but also the joy in the heart of the one who walks through the gate.

There is no commandment about not being rich. Only the revelation that God has chosen to be poor while rich in mercy.



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

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