

## **28th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Mark 10:17-30**

Almost every boy has at sometime said, "When I grow up I want to be a fireman." How thrilling it must seem to stand on the back of a big red fire truck as it races toward a fire, with sirens blaring and lights flashing!

How dramatic to climb a ladder and rescue someone from a burning building. How satisfying to be named a hero with your picture in the newspaper. Or so it seems to a young boy.

For the veteran fire fighter though, the romance ended long ago. They have made thousands of trips in the middle of the night and climbed up many a ladder. They have breathed in poisonous smoke, suffered burns and injuries and watched as fellow fire fighters have died. Firemen know better than anyone else why hell is described in terms of fire.

Many a fire fighter have asked themselves if it is all worth the limited pay or the retirement pension still far in the future. Why then would someone want to continue in a job like that? Well, one fireman I knew, who happened to be my grandfather gave this answer: "I know that I could not do anything else with such a great sense of accomplishment."

His answer I think reflects the spirit of wisdom presented in our first reading today. It's much like the attitude of the nun who was a nurse in a Louisiana hospital for lepers.

A man watched her changing bandages on the ulcerated legs of a patient and said, "Sister, I would not do what you do for a million dollars." The sister, barely looking up, replied, "Neither would I."

Study after study have been conducted trying to find the source of this thing we call happiness. The conclusions can be summarized this way: "Happiness is not in proportion to wealth and leisure, but comes with a sense of accomplishment."

It is not without reason then that we have developed the saying, "Money can't buy happiness."

Men and women have retired hoping to enjoy a life of leisure, only to find a hollowness in having nothing worthwhile to do. They are unhappy. Yet people like the fireman and the nun have found happiness, not in wealth or leisure, but in a sense of accomplishment.

You know, the world didn't have to wait for studies to determine that happiness doesn't come from wealth and leisure. Jesus taught that very truth a long time ago.

In fact, he repeatedly warned that riches are a threat to achieving eternal happiness in heaven.....not the only threat, but certainly a major one.

That's why he invited the rich man to sell what he had and give to the poor so that he would have treasure in heaven.

And yet, everyone can and must listen to and hear, the spirit of the words of Jesus to that rich young man.

Everyone can acquire a sense of detachment from wealth, and a realization that money is not the end and goal of life, but only a means for supporting life.

No one can deny that it is nice to have enough money to do things and go places and not have to worry about making ends meet. But isn't it true that after you've taken that trip or enjoyed some entertainment or some purchase there comes an emptiness when it's all over or the newness has worn off? The pleasure soon fades.

But when you do something for someone else, when you have followed the teaching of Jesus to love your neighbor as He loved you, the satisfaction **does** last. And the reward will last forever.

A camel trying to pass through the eye of a needle is no more ludicrous than a greedy person trying to squeeze into the kingdom of heaven.

In the Eucharist we have a living memorial of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Today we are celebrating this Mass because of the command of Jesus, "Do this in memory of me."

We will keep his command not only by celebrating the Mass, but also by trying to lead lives which reflect His sacrificial spirit.

That spirit led Jesus to lay down his life for all. It should lead us to be generous and unselfish with others. It is that spirit alone that gives us what we all seek, that elusive quality which we call happiness.

Today I invite you to take a moment and imagine yourself standing before Jesus as the rich young man did and hearing him say to you, "Purge from your life whatever is keeping you from giving yourself to others and to me and **THEN** come and follow me." AMEN!