

**Father Philip Neri Lastimoso, O. Cist.**  
**Our Lady of Dallas Cistercian Abbey**  
**28th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B**  
**October 11th, 2015**  
**Gospel: Mark 10: 17-30**

Eleven and a half years ago, in preparation for joining the Cistercian Abbey, and inspired by today's Gospel of the rich young man, I gave away my entire DVD collection. I was a big movie fan in college, and during my college days, I amassed a large collection of movies. I would say about 50. And in order to embrace my monastic vow of poverty as best I could, to truly follow Christ's call to leave everything and follow Him, I gave them all away. I gave away all of my movies, all 50 of them.

Strangely enough, if you were to visit my room in the monastery now, 11.5 years after I gave away all my movies, you would see something very surprising. You find that I have about 70 DVDs now. Some of them were gifts. Some of them were purchased with the approval of my superiors. And some of them were reclaimed. I actually went out and tracked down the people to whom I gave my DVDs and asked for them back. Not all but some.

There are several big moments in life where Christ calls you to make a sacrifice and follow Him. We confront these big moments when we have to make life-changing, life-determining decisions. When you pick what college we go to, when you get married, when you choose a career, when you have kids.

In those big moments, most of us follow the will of Christ. Or at least, I hope and believe and trust that we do. In those big moments, I like to think we Catholics choose to live according to God's will not our own. In those big moments, I like to think we Christians do, in fact, make the tough choices and the right decisions. We all have heard the story of the rich young man, and

we all have learned his lesson. We choose not to turn away from Christ sad but choose to leave behind our wills, our possessions, and everything else and follow Him.

However, human life is interesting. Making one decision to follow Christ is not enough. Even making several big decisions is not enough.

There are so many decisions in life, small ones in between the big ones. And with the many, many small decisions of life, we find ourselves making mistakes. Little mistakes that undermine our big decisions. And of course we like to rationalize away each and every one of those little bad decisions. We shrug our shoulders and say, “It just a venial sin. It isn’t mortal. No big deal.” Or we say “I made this one little mistake, but God doesn’t really notice something so small.” We tell ourselves this despite what we heard in today’s second reading today: nothing is concealed from Him, everything is exposed to His eyes.<sup>1</sup>

Each one of these small little incorrect decisions is like taking back one DVD. Each time we make a mistake, each time we rationalize it away, we tell ourselves that God doesn’t mind. God will let us have this one DVD back. He still has the other 49 that we gave up.

But if we keep doing that, we will wake up one day and see that we have taken it all back. We will realize that we have reclaimed everything we have sacrificed for God. We realize that we have taken back our own will, that at some point down the line we stopped submitting our will to His.

In fact, we sometimes realize that we have taken back even more than what we sacrificed in the first place. We realize that we have taken back 70 DVDs when we first sacrificed 50 DVDs. And so what do we do about this problem of giving up everything to God one day but then over the course of a decade taking it all back?

---

<sup>1</sup> Heb 4:13

A few months ago, I encountered a quote from Blessed John Henry Newman that can help us with this problem. Blessed John Henry Newman said, “We do not truly wish to please God. Rather, we wish to please ourselves without displeasing God.”

Connecting this to the first reading, I believe Blessed Newman would say that few of us seek the wisdom of Christ. Rather, we all prefer our own riches, health, and comeliness more.<sup>2</sup> We pursue those with the vain hope that we do so without offending God.

In the spiritual life, most people try to do the bare minimum. People try to do just enough to not make God angry at them. Most people just want to squeak by and sneak into Purgatory. The rich young man is a prime example of this. He follows the commandments because ultimately the commandments do not inconvenience him, but when Christ asks him to do something big, something beyond the minimum, he turns away sad.

It is interesting to see how people fit prayer into their daily life. When people describe their day, they usually do so by listing all the things they have to do. And then they try to fit prayer into all the little gaps between their life’s requirements. A solid bit prayer in the morning, a solid bit of prayer in the evening, and hopefully, a little bit of prayer sprinkled in between.

At first glance, that seems pretty good. However, approaching life in this way opens us up to the problem of the DVDs. We intend to give God 15 minutes here and 15 minutes there. But as the day moves forward, as things get busy, as life gets hectic, we take back those 15 minutes here and we take back those 15 minutes there. Until we have taken back all the time we intended to dedicate to God. And we find ourselves in a room of 70 DVDs and not a single minute of good prayer.

---

<sup>2</sup> Wis 7:7-11

And so I think we need to approach our daily life in a completely different way. We must structure every single one of our days around God. Our life should not be a list of earthly requirements with prayer sprinkled in between. To live life like that would be pleasing ourselves without displeasing God. Rather, our times of prayer should be the immovable moments of the day. Our tasks, our to-do lists, our work, our rest, and everything else should be scheduled around our times of prayer. To live life like that would be pleasing to God.

Restructuring our life in this way. To make every day revolve around our prayer life, around our relationship with God. It requires a decision, a choice every morning. It requires us to make a big sacrifice every day. To restructure our life in this way solves the problem of the DVDs.

No longer will we leave our big decisions of following Christ to the big moments of life and then let all the little decisions of life undermine that big decision. Instead, we make a big decision to follow Him every day. We turn every little decision of life into a big decision, into that one big decision where we wish to please Him, rather than ourselves, that big decision where we leave behind everything and follow Him.

To wake up every day and dedicate your whole day, all your possessions, all of your DVDs, all your choices and decisions, your entire will and your entire life. To wake up every day and dedicate all these things to God is difficult. In fact, it is impossible. But take comfort in Christ's final words from today's Gospel, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Mk 10:27