Our Lady of Lourdes

28th Sunday of Ordinary Time
October 11, 2009

Readings:
Wisdom 7:7-11
Hebrews 4:12-13
Mark 10:17-30

The rich young man wanted to be assured of salvation. He was a good man; an observant Jew and someone Jesus looked on with love. But he was hoping the law would save him. He wanted to be sure of gaining heaven by jumping through the right hoops, at the right time, for the right reasons. Jesus doesn't reject the importance of faithful and good living, but he offers the young man a relationship that would make sense of the choices involved in following him. Without a loving relationship with God, who calls us to live the best life we can. We do believe, however, in a God who makes demands of us, who often challenges us in the places where we are most vulnerable. For the young man, his money was an obstacle. He could not embrace a relationship with Jesus because this would have placed in peril his wealth and the comfort that his many possessions afforded him.

We have domesticated this radical edge of the Gospel. We often comfort ourselves with the assurance that the law will save us. Salvation comes from a loving relationship with him, shown in the sacrifice of our lives. To the degree that any law enables us to deepen this relationship with Jesus and to serve his people, then it is helpful and good. If a civil or religious law gets in the road, then its moral authority over us is questionable. For each of us, the obstacles to a real relationship with Christ might be different.

The matter of wealth is only one example. But Jesus could still make the same statement to us. "There is still one thing you lack, sell everything and come follow me." Or put another way, put aside those things that hold you back from being closer to me. In many ways it has suited us to move away from the hard teachings of Jesus. The law and money are in themselves neutral things, as well as the other things we might put in. They can be used for good or evil. At their worst, for the man in our Gospel the law and money could seduce him into pride, greed and power. At their best they could serve the liberation of all people and enable our world to better reflect the Kingdom of dignity, justice and equality Jesus taught and lived.

In today's Gospel we are given a challenge but also an outlook on our faith that sometimes we stray from. Our God is truly a demanding God, one who expects great things from us.
And at times it may seem we are frustrated like the disciples who felt it was almost impossible to be saved. But Christ was ready to give them there answer. Given that all things are possible for God, let's pray in this Eucharist that we might stop simplifying and watering down the Gospel and instead allow it to lead us more deeply into a relationship with Jesus who looks on us, loves us and calls us to write the law of love on our hearts in such a way that there will be justice for all people. And to love him in a way, that puts aside the barriers we put up, and allow ourselves to draw closer to the source of life, and the source of all that is good.