

Getting to the Top

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle B

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Matthew 19:23-30.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible." Then Peter said to him in reply, "We have given up everything and followed you. What will there be for us?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you that you who have followed me, in the new age, when the Son of Man is seated on his throne of glory, will yourselves sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

Introductory Prayer:

Lord, you know what is best for me, and that is why I believe in you. You are always faithful to your word and are more interested in my spiritual well-being than I am, and that is why I trust in you. In spite of my sins, you always give me your loving forgiveness, and that is why I love you, Lord.

Petition:

Lord, grant me a profound desire to reach heaven as shown by my proper use of material things.

1. Entering the Kingdom:

We know from the Gospels that Christ spends most of his public ministry preaching about the Kingdom of heaven. God wants to be the King of our hearts. This is impossible if we are attached to things. When Christ says that it will be hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven, he is speaking to every person. Christ is saying that to be attached to material things means not having room for God. It's not a matter of riches. Just as a mountain climber doesn't use heavy gear or take a weighty rucksack, in our spiritual climbing of the mountain (which is our intimate relationship with God), we need to be free of anything burdensome.

2. It Seems Impossible:

The reaction of the disciples helps us to remember how easy it is for us to be attached to ourselves, to things, to pleasures and to desires. To leave all of these in order to get to heaven may seem impossible for us to do. In fact, it is. No one can overcome these attachments without the help of God's grace. That is why Christ says, "For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible." God will take us to heaven if we let him. An overloaded boat will sink not because it is incapable of floating, but because the weight is more than it can carry. We can reach God when we empty ourselves and allow his grace fill our hearts.

3. Having Nothing in Order to Have It All:

We can usually give up something in order to receive something better. That is why the apostle Peter, not really sure of what "the prize" of his following Christ is, asks the Master, "What will there be for us?" The reward of our renunciation is to be with Christ, forever sharing in his glory. The awesome thing is that Christ tells us it's not something we will receive in the future, but something we can already begin to receive here on earth. St. John of the Cross, who had a profound love for Christ, understood very well that "to come to the possession you have not, you must go by a way in which you possess not" (The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Book 1, Chapter 13).

Conversation with Christ:

Lord, thank you for reminding me about what is necessary for me to do in order to reach heaven. It's so easy to get caught up with the things of this world and forget that they are worthless when compared to heaven.

Resolution:

I will offer up a concrete sacrifice: I will detach myself from something I like and reflect on heaven while doing it.