



## BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

8th Monday in Ordinary Time  
Memorial Day – May 27, 2024  
Reflection by Belinda Monahan, OSB

First Reading - 1 Pet 1:3-9  
Second Reading - Ps 111:1-2, 5-6, 9, 10c  
Gospel - Mark 10:17-27

“Why do you call me good? Only God is good.”

This was almost inevitably my father’s response if someone answered the casual inquiry “How are you?” by saying innocently “Good.” In today’s Gospel this quote is not a flip response to a grammatically questionable remark, rather it is, as is Jesus’s entire encounter with this rich man, the first of a series of invitations to move into a deeper relationship with God—to recognize Jesus as the Christ, to move beyond the rules, to follow him more closely, and to rest in the goodness of God. This series of invitations is, of course, not just for the rich man in today’s Gospel, but for all of us.

This encounter begins with the inquiry “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus’s response, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone, might seem, as one of the commentaries I read suggested, like a rebuke. But viewed in the light of what follows, it can also be seen as an invitation to this man (and to us): Jesus is a teacher, yes, but he is also much more than that, and to inherit eternal life, we must recognize this.

The encounter continues with Jesus listing a series of commandments, familiar to all of us, but especially to us as Benedictines, since Benedict begins his list of “Tools for Good works” with many of the same commandments. In her commentary on the Rule, Joan Chittister describes these as “a relatively standard and basic reference to a biblical description of a holy life.” But if we read further in Chittister, this list is not simply a set of rules to follow but “the call not simply to see Christ in each other, but to treat the other as Christ.”

When the rich man announces that he has done all of these things, Jesus loves him, and invites him (and us) to yet more. “Go sell what you have and give to the poor... then come follow me.” The rich man—at least as far as we can tell in today’s Gospel—is unable to do this.

But here I am standing up in front of a group of mostly vowed religious, and a priest and several others who have lived their lives in service to God and God’s people. Asking us to give up our material possessions and follow Jesus isn’t exactly new. We’ve done that.

So what does this invitation mean for us? Although when I think about packing up all of the stuff in this building, I wonder—I don’t think it’s necessarily about our material possessions. It is an invitation to let go of what is keeping us from following Jesus. For the young man it was his possessions, but what is it for each of us? Pride, fear, anger... I’m sure we each have our own lists of “things” that hinder us in following Jesus more closely.

Jesus’s final invitation in today’s Gospel. Is to his disciples—the folks who, as we’ll hear in tomorrow’s Gospel—have already given up everything to follow him. Jesus’s final remark “For

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people it is impossible, but not for God..." is a reminder that we are not saved through our own actions, but only through the goodness of the God who loves us.

Today we also celebrate Memorial Day, the day on which our nation commemorates the men and women who gave their lives in service to this country—who gave up everything for the common good. For many of us, it also marks the beginning of summer. Less monumental perhaps now that fewer of us are teachers are students, but still a season of rest and relaxation.

"Why do you call me good? God alone is good."

My invitation today—on this day of remembrance and relaxation—is to ponder Jesus's invitations and to rest in the goodness of God who loves us.

Happy Memorial Day