

Sunday October 20th

World Mission
Sunday 2024

**GO AND INVITE
EVERYONE**
to the banquet
(MT 22:9)



28th Sunday in Ordinary Time [B]

13 October 2024

People who read Scripture very carefully appreciate the small, human details of Mark's Gospel. Consider, for example, some words in the passage just proclaimed where the rich young man does not just approach Jesus. He "runs up" and "kneels down" in front of him. The man is not just disappointed. His "face falls." In the midst of the dialogue, Jesus does not simply glance at the man, rather, he "looks at him, loving him." These details lend a special flavor to the action.

Many of us may feel comfort when we can figure out the big things and appreciate the big picture. But the literary details found in Mark's Gospel remind us that little things are important, too. Maybe the big picture is what, overall, we want to view in life but the little details have to be part of that appreciation. Sometimes it is good to limit the frame of our vision and concentrate on small things which link together to draw out the large view. Life often is truly more manageable when we concentrate on the small and not let the big overwhelm us. There is truth and beauty to be discovered in limitation.

The relationship between the large and the small feels important in the readings today. In the first reading from the book of Wisdom, the author recognizes the virtue of prudence as a powerful gift and force for good. These days when we use the word "prudence" we might mean something like 'careful' or 'cautious.' "She made a prudent financial decision by paying off her credit card debt instead of going on an expensive vacation," we might say. But the deeper, longer traditional understanding of that word refers not so much to caution but, rather, to strategy. Prudence is the virtue by which a person has skill to figure out how to reach an important goal. Prudence is what helps us put all the little pieces together into the big picture of an action.

In the work of the Missions, prudence is crucial. The missionary has a big, overall purpose: to proclaim the Kingdom of God. But how can that happen? What are the best, right little steps that lead to that solemnly important goal? If, like the author of the book of Wisdom, the missionary prays and receives prudence as a gift then he can have faith that the way will be made clear over time, step-by-step.

Still, we might get caught up too much in the little things and forget about the big picture. Prudence, if nurtured, allows us to have patience but still to see progress. Notice how the rich young man gets mixed up here. He's a good person and Jesus loves him but he wants to hurry, hurry, hurry. He has difficulty figuring out how to give away, or at least manage, his many possessions, with the ultimate goal of enjoying eternal life. It must feel like a puzzle to him, yet not an unsolvable one if he would only take the time to go step-by-step.

Prudence is hospitable -- it invites our hearts and minds to consider many possibilities but doesn't let us shirk the responsibility of narrowing down to what is good and possible.

Still, we have to be humble enough to settle into the details -- to spend time doing things that are worthy of action. There is no shame in little steps and small things.

As we continue with this Mass, Christ encourages us to have our sights set on a distant goal while he also strengthens us in this Eucharist to be patient in pursuing the small steps needed to get there. Let us pray to become people willing to take the risk of following Christ right now in order to enjoy eternal life with him in time to come.