



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



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August 18, 2008  
Monday of the Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time

Reading 1                    Ez 24:15-23

The word of the LORD came to me:  
Son of man, by a sudden blow  
I am taking away from you the delight of your eyes,  
but do not mourn or weep or shed any tears.  
Groan in silence, make no lament for the dead,  
bind on your turban, put your sandals on your feet,  
do not cover your beard, and do not eat the customary bread.  
That evening my wife died,  
and the next morning I did as I had been commanded.  
Then the people asked me, “Will you not tell us what all these things  
that you are doing mean for us?”  
I therefore spoke to the people that morning, saying to them:  
Thus the word of the LORD came to me:  
Say to the house of Israel:  
Thus says the Lord GOD:  
I will now desecrate my sanctuary, the stronghold of your pride,  
the delight of your eyes, the desire of your soul.  
The sons and daughters you left behind shall fall by the sword.  
Ezekiel shall be a sign for you:  
all that he did you shall do when it happens.  
Thus you shall know that I am the LORD.  
You shall do as I have done,  
not covering your beards nor eating the customary bread.  
Your turbans shall remain on your heads, your sandals on your feet.  
You shall not mourn or weep,  
but you shall rot away because of your sins and groan one to another.

Responsorial Psalm    Deuteronomy 32:18-19, 20, 21

R. (see 18a) You have forgotten God who gave you birth.  
You were unmindful of the Rock that begot you.  
You forgot the God who gave you birth.  
When the LORD saw this, he was filled with loathing  
and anger toward his sons and daughters.  
    “I will hide my face from them,” he said,  
    “and see what will then become of them.  
    What a fickle race they are,  
    sons with no loyalty in them!”



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“Since they have provoked me with their ‘no-god’  
and angered me with their vain idols,  
I will provoke them with a ‘no-people’;  
with a foolish nation I will anger them.”

Gospel            Mt 19:16-22

A young man approached Jesus and said,  
“Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?”  
He answered him, “Why do you ask me about the good?  
There is only One who is good.  
If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”  
He asked him, “Which ones?”  
And Jesus replied, “You shall not kill;  
you shall not commit adultery;  
you shall not steal;  
you shall not bear false witness;  
honor your father and your mother;  
and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”  
The young man said to him,  
“All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?”  
Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go,  
sell what you have and give to the poor,  
and you will have treasure in heaven.  
Then come, follow me.”  
When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad,  
for he had many possessions.

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Welcome to Non-book day and welcome to Faculty Days.

I used to enjoy walking through book day and seeing people and I really used to enjoy Faculty Days when Fr Gregory was headmaster.

It is good to see so many members of the Priory family, so many friends as we prepare for the beginning of the new school year.

For such an occasion, the first reading was a little harsh, I'm afraid. Obviously God was just a little bit angry with the people of Israel.

I expect that the story in the gospel for today is one that many here can relate to in one way or another.

A young man approached Jesus and said, "Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?"

There are a lot of young men here, and I hope that all of us are concerned about eternal life.

In Jesus time not all people were concerned about that, ...not all Jews or true believers. We don't know about this young man, whether he believed or not, whether his question reflected a genuine interest in finding an answer or just curiosity. A lot of people did come to listen to Jesus out of curiosity or just to see a good old fashioned miracle.

Jesus answers do seem to test the young man a little. Keep the commandments, Jesus says, which the young man has done, or at least says he has.

But having kept the commandments, the young man obviously feels that something is still missing, that he does not have eternal life. He asks "What do I still lack?"

And he does not like the answer he receives. The answer "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor."

Did the young man ask to be perfect? Not in so many words, but he was so close...he was doing such a great job of keeping the commandments. Perhaps he was called to be perfect.

Jesus answer was telling him to live as God lives, to love as God loves, to give as God gives, generously, without counting the cost, to the deserving and undeserving; who are we to judge...when everything that we have to give ultimately comes from and belongs to God.



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No, the young man did not like the answer, because, we are told, he had many possessions, to which obviously, he was very attached. Too attached.

Jesus answer was a test, which the young flunked, at least for the moment. We are not told if there was a retest. Often God's word challenges us and we have to wrestle with it for a while, perhaps even a lifetime to be able to accept what God is asking us.

In St Marks telling of this story in His Gospel, he adds the detail that Jesus "Looked on the young man with love" for his goodness and great potential, and Jesus was obviously sad that the young man, who could have and should have followed Jesus, flunked the first test.

As I said, there is a lot that teachers and students can relate to in this story.

What is most important, I think, is that Jesus' answers to the young man's questions tell us that eternal life begins in this life.

What we are attached to, and live our lives for and follow, is our choice. If we choose possessions, wealth, power, stuff...if that is what we want and work for above all, well we will have it ...but we won't have eternal life.

Eternal life is a divine life and it require some divine attitudes and living from us.

When Jesus explains this to the Apostles, after the young man goes away, they despair and ask "then how can anyone be saved ?" How can anyone have eternal life ?

Jesus answers...Man can't do it by himself. But with God all things are possible.

That is why we are here today, as the Priory family of the church. Because we can't do it by ourselves.

We need God's grace as mediated by the Church,  
We need the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist we celebrate,  
We need the presence of Jesus Christ in Scriptures we read and hear,  
We need the presence of Jesus Christ in each other to love and challenge and serve.  
We are called to be perfect.

And I can't think of a more perfect way, a more perfect place, a more perfect time or a more perfect group of people with whom to begin practicing.