

I Don't Care What Jesus *Would* Say!

28th Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year B

Wisdom 7:7-11
Psalms 90:12-13, 14-15, 16-17

Hebrews 4:12-13
Mark 10:17-27

A popular question when facing a moral dilemma or an application of the Christian faith is: “What would Jesus do?” or “What would Jesus say?” While it can be a deep reflection on what it means to imitate Christ, have you ever noticed that those who ask the question, invariably answer that question the same way, regardless of the issue at hand – “What do you know! Jesus would do exactly what *I* would do!”

As a Catholic and a priest, I have long since abandoned that question, because it is too easy to be subjective in the answer, reducing Jesus to nothing more than an imaginary friend who will always agree with me, and reducing the faith I profess to nothing more than wishful thinking, rather than the adherence to absolute and eternal truths, and the standards we are called to live by. To be honest, and in the interest of full disclosure, I care little about what Jesus *would* say, and about what Jesus *would* do. Instead, I focus on what Jesus *did* say and on what



Jesus, in fact, *did*.

In answering such a question as to how Jesus would guide us if He were with us in person, have we ever considered answering the question, “What would Jesus say/do?” with another question? “What is the last thing I would want Jesus to say/do?” (knowing He would never tell us to sin). More than once throughout the four Gospels, Jesus is asked a question, sometimes with the implied hope that He will provide a desired answer. “Will only a few be saved?” implies the hope that Jesus will respond that many will be saved. Instead, Jesus replies with His teaching on the “narrow door” (Luke 13:23-28) in which He responds (in summary) “many will try, few will succeed and *you* will be left out.” Not exactly the answer any of us would be

hoping for.

When the Rich Young Man asks what he must do to inherit eternal life, he leaves crestfallen when Jesus gives, perhaps, the last answer the man wanted to hear:

The Rich Young Man

“Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor” (Mark 10:21-22). In response to the Rich Young Man’s walking away, Jesus gives further commentary that, again, not many of us would want to hear: “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:23). When the Apostles then assert that they have given up everything to follow Him, Jesus, in what can be considered a biblical hat-trick, responds that they will receive back a hundred times more what they have given up, “with persecutions” (Mark 10:29-30) - this to a group of men who would later abandon Jesus at the first sign of trouble.

When we see how Jesus related to His Disciples while He was among them, we can recognize His pattern of never giving any assurances, always expecting one more

thing from all of us, and challenging us to think not as humans think, but as God thinks; not to kid ourselves with our own expectations and prejudices on what Jesus *would* say and do, but on what is truly expected of anyone who would consider themselves His followers.

Ergo, the best clue as to “What would Jesus say/do?”, might be to ponder “What is the last thing I would want Jesus to say/do?” all based on what Jesus actually said and did.

That may give us the best clue to how we should apply our faith to the questions, issues and dilemmas we face as “modern day” followers of Christ.

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“What is the last
thing I would want
Jesus to say/do?”