

A woman died and met St. Peter. She immediately saw a huge mansion, and St. Peter said it belonged to her chauffeur. Knowing that she was more refined and godly, she got excited to see her new home. The Saint then pointed to a one room cottage. The woman, indignant, exclaimed "I can't possibly live there." St. Peter answered her "I did the best with the material you sent me!"

That story was told much funnier by Archbishop Fulton Sheen, a personal hero of mine. It raises a question though, of how do we build our riches? There are countless answers - prayer, almsgiving, fasting and so on. I think there's something more primordial.

When asked who is Jorge Bergolio, Pope Francis answered "A sinner looked upon by the face of Mercy." This is where our riches begin and end. As the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith, so is the face of Mercy, the face of Perfect Love turned toward us in our sin, the source and summit of our lives and our constant conversion.

Archbishop Sheen talks about the difference between "nice" people and "awful" people. "Nice" people, he says, never sin because they always have a reason: maybe our reason is mental health, or addiction, or a poor family life, or a lack of role models. They judge themselves by the vices from which they avoid. "Awful" people judge themselves by the virtues from which they have fallen, and if they see someone headed to the gallows answer, along with St. Philip Neri, "there but for the grace of God go I."

I think that another word we could use, rather than nice, is "good." As in "I'm a good Catholic. I do good things. I go to Mass every Sunday. I don't contracept. I fight against abortion. I'm nothing like those sinners who are 'personally-opposed' to evil, but still embrace it."

Gentlemen, I challenge you: if you are a "good" Catholic, know that you are on the wide path. And the path is wide because it is empty. Empty of the altar Christus, empty of the poor, the wounded, the unChurched. It is empty of the Cross and the wine of Cana has been turned back into water because there is no room for Christ, only our own goodness.

The good people we see in Scripture:

Nicodemus, who can only meet with Jesus in the secret of the night

The rich young man who goes away sadly

The elder son who refuses to enter his father's house

Then you have the awful people:

The tax collector who beats his chest and begs for mercy

The woman caught in adultery

St. Joseph

Now, it's true that Joseph was righteous and wanted to do the right thing, but his plans got in the way. His plan to quietly abandon his betrothed was destroyed by an angel who said "This is

your plan, but God has a better one.” Joseph quickly repented, that is, changed his path, which lead to the manger. Then he had another plan, to return home and return to his career and raise his family. Again the angel appeared and said “Your plans are not God’s plans” and so Joseph again corrected and went into unfamiliar lands, surrounded by those who were not good, were not righteous, who were pagans.

Again, Joseph was able to return to his life and his plans. As a result, he lost sight of Jesus and had to again turn back, to repent and correct his course to find the God-child in His father’s house, the temple in Jerusalem. And from there, we have every reason to believe that Joseph lived a life that was centered on Jesus and Mary until he died, because he first acknowledged that he was imperfect and needed God’s guidance constantly.

Finally, a brief story. When I was seventeen, I was blessed to meet Fr. Andrew Apostoli. I got to spend about two hours in conversation with him, and at the end I told him I had never met someone so holy. Father recoiled as though I had struck him and quickly reprimanded me - “Only God is Holy”

Gentlemen, now is a time to repent of our goodness, our holiness, our plans that we have made to be righteous. Now is the time to accept that only God is Good. Only God is Holy. Only God can save. Now is the time to beg for the grace to see this world not as full of enemies, but full of wounded men and women bleeding to death for want of our intervention and intercession. To see a world that needs us, not to be “good,” but to be the field medics that our Holy Father has called us to be. Now is the time to run head first into the smoke and gunfire and to pray that we, unworthy servants, may assist the Lord in saving just one more.

Now, lets take a moment to ask for God’s mercy together.

Lord, for the times that lust has ruled in my heart, and pulled me from showing Perfect Love,
Lord Have Mercy

Lord, for the times that gluttony for the things of this world has overruled the riches of the next,
Lord Have Mercy

Lord, for the times that greed has taken over and kept me from giving all of myself to you and my neighbor, Lord Have Mercy

Lord, for the times that sloth has kept me from running into battle, Lord Have Mercy

Lord, for the times that wrath has lead me to see your children as my enemies, Lord Have Mercy

Lord, for the times that envy has blinded me to the gifts you have given me, Lord Have Mercy

Lord, for the times that pride has lead me to sit in the throne of my heart, Lord Have Mercy

Song: Lord Have Mercy by Michael W Smith

Psalm 6