

Wednesday of the Eighth week of Ordinary Time / Sajnos, nincs magyar fordítás!

(Mk10:35-45) St. Francis of Assisi endearingly called death his sister. According to St. Paul, "Life is Christ and death is gain!" (Phil1:21) The curse of physical death now serves as a remedy against pride – the mother of all vices. Pride is sometimes haughty, but forever ungrateful. We can be chronically ungrateful without even realizing it. That's why we complain far more readily than we give thanks. We concentrate on trifling evils and ignore enormous goods following thereupon – like the couple that is unwilling to have another child because of the pain that raising it would entail. They seem oblivious to life's joys and fixated on its trials. Were they to have that child anyway, they would sooner raise him ten, even a hundred times rather than lose him once to death! Why? – Because the joy that love brings immeasurably surpasses the sorrow which that same love entails. This law about love, which is true for couples in their married life, is also true for every one of us here in our spiritual life. We instinctively recoil from the dark night but if we ever got through it, we'd go through ten, even a hundred dark nights rather than return to our former mediocrity. Spiritual hindsight is crystal clear. Why, then, is spiritual foresight so blind? – Because the trials that love entails are more sensible, while the joys love brings are far less so. For this reason, they fall beyond our spiritual horizon – submerged, as we are, in a sea of sensibilities. For the body, there is no greater tragedy than death. For the soul, however, death is now our doorway to heaven. St. Paul was able to discount the trials that death entails because he already perceived the glow of heaven's bliss dawning over his spiritual horizon. He was a mystic who had already passed through the dark night of the spirit.

In today's gospel, the apostles are still beginners in the spiritual life. Immersed in sensible realities, they easily became indignant with James and John. They all coveted the first place and despised the last. If Jesus could rehabilitate life's greatest curse – death – turning it into our greatest blessing, then He can do the same for every other curse here below. Work became a curse for Adam's clan, yet in today's gospel our Lord rehabilitates it. He taught His apostles that it is more blessed to obey than to command, more blessed to serve than to be served. Are we oblivious to life's joys and fixated on its trials? Then let's extend our spiritual horizon by practicing gratitude! Let's thank God in adversity and prosperity, in anticipation and in subsequence! On the evil day, let us turn our complaints into acts of faith in God's inscrutable providence! Why wait till our sight, hearing and good health fail before we truly appreciate these gifts? Why wait until trifling tasks like eating and bathing become monumental? Let gratitude well up in our souls right now. Then, when breath grows short and limbs become weak, when the spirit is crushed – rather than complaining – we will sing the song of death's brother, Francis:

"Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord, all praise is Yours, all glory, honor and blessing. To you alone, Most High, do they belong; no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name. We praise You, Lord, for all Your creatures, especially for Brother Sun, who is the day through whom You give us light... We praise You, Lord, for those who pardon, who for love of You bear sickness and trial. Blessed are those who endure in peace, by You Most High, they will be crowned. We praise You, Lord, for Sister Death, from whom no-one living can escape. Woe to those who die in their sins! Blessed are those that She finds doing Your Will. No second death can do them harm. We praise and bless You, Lord, and give You thanks, and serve You in all humility." Amen!