

Homily based on the readings from August 18, 2025 (Judges 2.11-19;
Matthew 19.16-22)

There are over eight billion people alive today, and every single one of us is unique. Each of us has our own strengths and weaknesses, our own talents and shortcomings. Some people possess remarkable gifts, such as physical strength or intellectual prowess. On the other hand, many people struggle throughout their lives to overcome perennial sins – such as anger or jealousy. In many ways, these attributes – both positive and negative – define how we live our lives. They affect our interactions with other people, and especially our relationship with Jesus Christ.

There are several important points to remember. First and foremost, we must keep in mind that God loves each one of us unconditionally – regardless of the negative attributes we *do* possess and the positive attributes we do *not* possess. An earthly parent does not base his love for his children on a scorecard, and neither does our Heavenly Father.

Secondly, whatever positive attributes we do possess are not the result of our own virtue, but are a completely undeserved gift from God himself. If we are wise, if we are articulate, if we are skillful, if we are vigorous – these are all talents that are on loan from the Lord. It is our duty to use these qualities, in whatever ways we can, to take care of our brothers and sisters – particularly those who do not possess the same gifts – and to give witness to the love and mercy of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, it is our own responsibility – strengthened by the sacraments of the Church and the prayers of the saints – to work *tirelessly* to overcome whatever negative qualities we possess. We can recognize our particular deficiencies without shame or embarrassment, but we must never *accept* them. Through the grace of God, we can always *do* better – we must always *become* better.

Today's Gospel presents a conversation between Jesus and a young man who appears to possess an inverted sense of responsibility. In other words, *he* is taking credit for his strengths – not killing, not committing

adultery, not stealing – but at the same time he *refuses* to take ownership of his failings – especially his inordinate love of money and possessions.

The specific details of this man’s situation might not pertain to all of us, but the basic outline does. If we wish to grow and thrive as disciples of Christ, we must acknowledge God as the source of all our successes and blame only ourselves for our failures. That which is *good* we must dedicate to Christ and that which is *bad* we must overcome *through* Christ. In an absolute sense, we must all remember that “[t]here is only One who is good.” Devoting ourselves to *his* service – each of us in our own unique way – is the only pathway to eternal life.