

23. October 2023

Fighting greed

Lk 12:13-21

One of the multitude said to Jesus, "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?" And he said to them, "Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

The Lord does not respond to all the demands that are presented to Him, and so he gives us an example that we must discern which things belong to our vocation and which do not. Those called to proclaim the Gospel must be careful not to interfere in the affairs of this world. The Church as a whole should also heed this advice of the Lord. In the Spirit of God, one must weigh very carefully what serves the spread of the Gospel and what detracts from this task. This criterion applies especially to priests or religious, but also to Christians living in the world. One should not interfere in everything, nor allow others to interfere in matters that do not belong to one.

Greed, in any of its manifestations, deforms the person. In the case of material greed, it is the absurd desire to possess wealth in order to secure one's life, to enjoy it and also to exercise power. It is a great illusion to live according to this maxim, as the Lord so wisely affirms! Anyone who lives in this way, focusing all his aspirations on the accumulation of transitory goods, is a fool, a foolish man. The miser wanders through life, and we can only hope and pray that one day he will wake up from his illusion and devote himself to what really counts in his existence.

But the Lord's teaching applies to all forms of greed. One can be greedy even for spiritual things and religious experiences, hoarding them as others hoard material goods.

Deep down there must be an emptiness in the soul, a desire that has not been fulfilled, a

hunger that has not been satisfied. Therefore, one seeks to possess that which promises something. And greed does not only affect one's own soul; there is something ruthless and even violent in it, which makes a person capable of trampling on other people in order to achieve his own interests.

Therefore, if we do not restrain and overcome in ourselves the disordered appetites that seek to be satisfied at all costs, then greed will obviously spread to many different areas, and it can become a bad attitude that marks our whole life.

In the last sentence of today's Gospel, the Lord offers us the means to overcome greed. We are to lay up treasures in heaven: treasures of love that we can give to God and to our brothers and sisters. If we discover greed in ourselves, we must make choices. One of them would be to share material goods. Another important step would be to acknowledge before the Lord our inner insatiability and ask Him to show us that His love is enough for us. We must adopt an attitude of simplicity and work on ourselves again and again. It is also necessary to dissolve those inner hardenings caused by greed and to ask the Spirit of God to show us what forms of greed are in us and in what areas they manifest themselves.

If we take this battle seriously, the Lord will deliver us step by step. But we must make a firm decision to turn away from all manifestations of greed. If we do not feel able to do this, let us at least ask God for the grace to desire it.