

11. November 2023

Detachment from money

Lk 16:9-15

'And so I tell you this: use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends, and thus make sure that when it fails you, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings. Anyone who is trustworthy in little things is trustworthy in great; anyone who is dishonest in little things is dishonest in great. If then you are not trustworthy with money, that tainted thing, who will trust you with genuine riches? And if you are not trustworthy with what is not yours, who will give you what is your very own? 'No servant can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.' The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and jeered at him. He said to them, 'You are the very ones who pass yourselves off as upright in people's sight, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed in human eyes is loathsome in the sight of God.'

On another occasion, we mentioned that one way to "win friends" in eternity is to pray for the souls in purgatory, which is also a deed of spiritual mercy.

At the beginning of today's Gospel, the theme of using time to store up treasure for eternity comes up again. We probably don't think much about how easy it is to follow this advice of the Lord - He will reward all that we do with our eyes fixed on Him! And indeed, what better thing could we do with that "unrighteous money", which for so many becomes a stumbling block, than to use it to help those in need?

Certainly not everyone is called to give up all their possessions to follow Christ in total poverty. But, yes, everyone can share, and everyone should let go of attachment to possessions and the supposed security they promise. This advice is not insignificant, for whoever has been responsible in the handling of money, using it as God pleases, will be entrusted with greater things. On the other hand, if someone is miserly, the Lord will hardly entrust him with the care of other people, because if this fundamental problem is not overcome, it will probably also affect the relationship with people, who will easily be looked at from the perspective of self-interest.

God does not allow Himself to be deceived and, however righteous someone may appear on the outside, God knows our heart. That is why I will never tire of insisting that we

must strive again and again to achieve purity of heart and to overcome, with God's help, the evils of stinginess and greed. For this, on the one hand, it is necessary to make concrete acts, sometimes even very great ones, to detach ourselves from attachment to possessions. But in general, the problem is not overcome from one moment to the next; rather, it is necessary to detach oneself and to struggle daily in order to become free. In this context, it is worth remembering the practice of fasting, which is not only to restrain our cravings, among other spiritual purposes, but also to open our hearts to the needs of the poor.

How revealing is the last sentence of today's Gospel! "*What is highly esteemed in human eyes is loathsome in the sight of God*" says the Lord. We can apply this statement to riches, as well as to other matters.... God's thoughts are indeed very different from ours; and often our perception of reality is quite distorted. Only the light of the gospel gives us a complete view of reality as God sees it; it enables us to respond to the true values of life and to reject the anti-values.

The fact that wealth is regarded in this world as a badge of prestige and honour manifests the blindness of making material goods the standard of what is worthy of aspiration. This blindness can spread from generation to generation! People may laugh when they hear this, just as the Pharisees did in today's gospel. However, if one remains dependent on earthly goods, the soul can neither breathe easy nor enjoy the freedom of the children of God. Those who live like this will be confined within the narrow confines of their life and, moreover, will place additional burdens on their backs.