

8. November 2024

## Sagacity of the children of light

Lk 16:1-13

*He also said to his disciples, 'There was a rich man and he had a steward who was denounced to him for being wasteful with his property. He called for the man and said, "What is this I hear about you? Draw me up an account of your stewardship because you are not to be my steward any longer." Then the steward said to himself, "Now that my master is taking the stewardship from me, what am I to do? Dig? I am not strong enough. Go begging? I should be too ashamed. Ah, I know what I will do to make sure that when I am dismissed from office there will be some to welcome me into their homes." Then he called his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, "How much do you owe my master?" "One hundred measures of oil," he said. The steward said, "Here, take your bond; sit down and quickly write fifty." To another he said, "And you, sir, how much do you owe?" "One hundred measures of wheat," he said. The steward said, "Here, take your bond and write eighty." The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness. For the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light.' 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 unfaithful manager looked for a way out, and, in the midst of his unfortunate situation, he knew how to make "friends" who would be indebted to him. He knew well how to deal with people so as to place them in compromising positions... He knew the "rules" of this world. Although in the context of dishonesty, he acted as the Lord recommends to His disciples after having told them this parable: *"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"* (Lk 16:9).

Jesus wants to make us see that we should be shrewd in our dealings with people and with the gifts entrusted to us. In spiritual formation, we speak of "Christian prudence", which is related to shrewdness.

*"Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven"* - the Lord advises us (Mt 6:20). These words of His are related to the exhortation we heard in yesterday's Gospel to always have oil for our lamps, like the wise virgins (Mt 25:1-13). When Jesus returns, He wants to find us watching, praying and busy serving the Kingdom of God.

Christian prudence invites us to opt for that which most glorifies God and to take advantage of all circumstances to grow in love on our path of discipleship. This prudence - or shrewdness - confers on our life an elementary guideline: How can we use the present time and the present circumstances to do good, to live as God pleases and also to win over other people?

As far as our neighbor is concerned, it is not only material goods with which we can serve him. Every gesture of love, every edifying and sincere word, every proclamation of the Gospel, every true help usually arouses gratitude in the other person, and they will remember it when we ourselves are in need.

True prudence seeks the good. It is not to be confused with worldly cunning or mischievousness. This is certainly one reason why Jesus mentions the "cunning of the serpent" along with the "gentleness of the dove" (Mt 10:16). Worldly cunning does not question or strive for the objective good or the transcendental value of things; rather, it seeks to take advantage of all circumstances to achieve its own goals. Depending on the predispositions of the person's temperament, this cunning can easily be associated with deceit, swindling, dishonesty and other vices, which have nothing to do with the virtue of prudence nor with the sagacity of the children of light.

In mentioning the meekness of doves, Jesus is certainly referring to purity of intention. If this is pure, the means will also be chosen shrewdly and prudently, in such a way that they are in accordance with this purity; and one will not opt for dishonest means to achieve an apparently good and legitimate end. "The end justifies the means" is a perverse expression, the falsity of which can lead to terrible justifications.

Having the right orientation, the virtue of prudence reaches its maximum splendor and the greatest possible fruitfulness of our path. We will thus begin to live in what we call the "Kairos". Every day and every circumstance becomes an opportunity to be shrewdly seized for eternity, accumulating treasure in heaven (Mt 6:20). Thus, not only do we live in friendship with God, but we can also make friends in heaven.

In this context, I would like to refer specifically to the help we can offer to the blessed souls in purgatory. Here we can relate two ends: on the one hand, we help them through our prayer; and, at the same time, we win friends in heaven. We can imagine how grateful a soul will be, who has received comfort and consolation through our prayer, and who has finally reached the beatific vision for which it so longed and under whose absence it suffered so much. For all eternity she will not forget us, and will bestow upon us her love and gratitude. And it is such a simple act on our part, but it has such fruitful effects! Simply praying a Hail Mary for them....

Let us also think of the countless possibilities of serving God. By applying the virtue of prudence, we will be more and more aware of them and our fervor to do good will grow. For when love moves us and we put it into practice, it grows stronger and stronger; whereas, if we do not follow its motions, love can grow cold and our life can sink into indifference.

As children of light, let us not be lazy to do good. Not that it is unlawful to do so in anticipation of the treasures we can lay up in heaven, but, of course, in the end, it is about growing in love for God, learning to do everything out of love for Him, just as He does everything out of love for us.