

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Gospel text (Mk 10:17-30): Just as Jesus was setting out on his journey again, a man ran up, knelt before him and asked, «Good Master, what must I do to have eternal life?». Jesus answered, «Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: Do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not cheat, honor your father and mother». The man replied, «I have obeyed all these commandments since my childhood». Then Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him and he said, «For you, one thing is lacking. Go, sell what you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven. Then come and follow me». On hearing these words, his face fell and he went away sorrowful for he was a man of great wealth (...).

Private property and Solidarity

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Today, we ponder in amazement over the "existential despondency" which grips the rich young man «for he was a man of great wealth». The problem is not the possessions, but our inability to love by our excessive addiction to them. The social doctrine of the Church supports private property and teaches that every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own but, at the same time, his possession—as private property—is legitimate to ensure the freedom and dignity of people.

The right to private property (like all other individual rights), when detached from a framework of duties which grant them their full meaning, can run wild, numbing the human heart before others needs. Duties set a limit on rights because they point to the anthropological and ethical framework in which rights are a part in this way ensuring that they do not become license.

—The right to "private property" must be accompanied by a "social mortgage", namely, the duty to possess property in a way compassionate with the needs of our neighbors.