Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Gospel text (*Mk* 10:17-30): As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother." He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions...

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.