

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. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, «How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!». The disciples were shocked at these words, but Jesus insisted, «Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God». They were more astonished than ever and wondered, «Who, then, can be saved?». Jesus looked steadily at them and said, «For humans it is impossible, but not for God; all things are possible with God». Peter spoke up and said, «We have given up everything to follow you». Jesus answered, «Truly, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters, or father or mother, or children, or lands for my sake and for the Gospel, who will not receive his reward. I say to you: even in the midst of persecution he will receive a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and lands in the present time and in the world to come eternal life».

«He went away sorrowful for he was a man of great wealth»

Fr. Xavier SERRA i Permanyer
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Today, we can see how Jesus —who loves us— wants us all to enter the Kingdom of God. Hence, the strong warning to the “rich”. They are also called to enter the Kingdom. But they do face more difficult challenges to open themselves to God. Their wealth may make them believe they already have everything; they are tempted to jeopardize their own safety and trust by placing them in their possibilities and riches. They do not realize that both their trust and safety should rather be placed in God. And not only through words, but through actions: it is very easy to say «Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in You», but how difficult it is to show it through your actions. If we are wealthy, when we sincerely recite the above short prayer, we should try to use our wealth to help others, feeling we are engaged in the stewardship of what God has given us.

I cooperate with a mission in Venezuela where I have to go regularly. There, really —in their poverty, missing most of what is needed— people realize they are hanging by a thread, and that their hold on life is very fragile. This situation helps them to see it is God who gives their lives a meaning, and that they actually are in the hands of God. On the other hand, here —in our modern world of conspicuous consumption— we have so many things that we can feel tempted to believe they can give us security, that we are hanging by a strong rope. But —like those “poor ones”—, our lives are also hanging by a very fine thread. As Mother Teresa said «We must free ourselves to be filled by God. Even God cannot fill what is full». We are risking having God just as another additional element of our life, another book in our library; important, yes, but just another book. Therefore, not considering him as our true and only Saviour.

The point is that whether wealthy or poor we cannot be saved just by ourselves: «Who, then, can be saved?» (Mk 10:26), will wonder the disciples, and Jesus will answer «For humans it is impossible, but not for God; all things are possible with God» (Mk 10:27). Let us all place our full trust in Jesus, and let it show up in our lives.