

Friday of the Thirty-first Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 16:1-8): Jesus said to his disciples, “A rich man had a steward who was reported to him for squandering his property. He summoned him and said, ‘What is this I hear about you? Prepare a full account of your stewardship, because you can no longer be my steward.’ The steward said to himself, ‘What shall I do, now that my master is taking the position of steward away from me? I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do so that, when I am removed from the stewardship, they may welcome me into their homes.’

He called in his master’s debtors one by one. To the first he said, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ He replied, ‘One hundred measures of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Here is your promissory note. Sit down and quickly write one for fifty.’ Then to another he said, ‘And you, how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘One hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Here is your promissory note; write one for eighty.’

And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently. For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than the children of light.”

“The children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than the children of light”

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Today, the Gospel proposes a question, which, at first sight, is rather extraordinary. St. Luke's text, indeed, says: “And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently” (Lk 16:8).

It goes without saying we are not being told here to be deceitful in our relationships amongst ourselves, much less, with our Lord. It is not therefore a praise to simply be a dishonest steward. What Jesus actually manifests in this example is a grievance for the shrewdness in dealing with the matters of this world and the lack of true wit of the sons of light in building God's Kingdom: “The children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than the children of light” (Lk 16:8).

All this proves —once again!— that men's hearts still have the same limits and miseries that they have ever had. We now may speak of traffic of influence, corruption, unjustified wealth, counterfeiting documents... More or less just as in Jesus' days.

But this poses a double question: Do we actually believe we can deceive God with our appearance, while pretending to be good Christians? And, when speaking of shrewdness, we should also speak of personal interest. Are we really interested in God's Kingdom and in His justice? As sons of light, is mediocrity our most frequent response? Jesus also said “For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be” (Mt 6:21).

What is our life's treasure? We should examine our desires so that we may find out where we keep our treasure... Saint Augustine tells us: “Your continuous yearning is your continuous voice. If you stop loving, your yearning will be silent.”

Maybe today, before our Lord, we have to ponder what our astuteness, as sons of light, should be, that is, the sincerity of our relationship with God and our brothers. “Life is truly always a choice: between honesty and dishonesty, between fidelity and infidelity, between good and evil (...). Ultimately, Jesus says, it is necessary to make a fundamental decision” (Benedict XVI).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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"The lord praised the steward whom he dismissed from his administration because he had looked to the future" (Saint Augustine)

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"The habit of bribes and kickbacks is a worldly and extremely sinful habit.... God commanded us to bring home bread through honest work". (Francis)

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"In God's plan man and woman have the vocation of "subduing" the earth (Gen 1:28) as stewards of God. This sovereignty is not to be an arbitrary and destructive domination. God calls man and woman, made in the image of the Creator "who loves everything that exists" (Wis 11:24), to share in his providence toward other creatures; hence their responsibility for the world God has entrusted to them" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 373)