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 presents us with a question that is surprising at first glance. Indeed, the text of Saint Luke states: "The master commended the dishonest steward for acting prudently" (Lk 16:8).

Clearly, we are not being encouraged here to be unjust in our relationships, and certainly not with the Lord. It is not, therefore, a matter of praising the fraud committed by the steward. What Jesus highlights with this example is a lament regarding the skill shown in handling the affairs of this world versus the lack of true ingenuity on the part of the children of light in building the Kingdom of God: "For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than the children of light" (Lk 16:8).

All this shows us —once again!— that the human heart continues to harbor the same limitations and

shortcomings as always. Nowadays, we speak of influence peddling, corruption, illicit enrichment, document forgery... Much like in the time of Jesus.

Yet, this raises a twofold question for us: Do we really think we can deceive God with our outward appearances or our mediocrity as Christians? And, while speaking of shrewdness, we must also speak of self-interest. Are we truly interested in the Kingdom of God and His justice? Is mediocrity common in our response as children of light? Jesus also said that where our treasure is, there our heart will be (cf. Mt 6:21). What is our treasure in life? We must examine our deepest longings to discover where our treasure lies... Saint Augustine tells us: “The freezing of charity is the silence of the heart; the burning of charity is the cry of the heart. If love continues still you are still lifting up your voice.”

Perhaps today, before the Lord, we must consider what our shrewdness as children of the light should be—that is, our sincerity in our relationships with God and with our brothers and sisters. "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

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

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

- "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)