Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Gospel text (*Mk* 12:38-44): In the course of his teaching Jesus said to the crowds, "Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes and accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in synagogues, and places of honor at banquets. They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext recite lengthy prayers. They will receive a very severe condemnation."

He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents. Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

"For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she has contributed all she had"

Fr. José MARTÍNEZ Colín
(Culiacán, Mexico)

Today, the Gospel presents Christ to us as Teacher and speaks to us of the detachment that we must live. A detachment, first of all, from our own honor or recognition, which we sometimes seek: “Beware of… accept greetings in the marketplaces, seats of honor in synagogues, and places of honor at banquets” (cf. Mk 12:38-39). In this sense, Jesus warns us of the bad example of the scribes.

Secondly, detachment from material things. Jesus praises the poor widow, while lamenting the falsehood of others: “For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she (the widow), from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood” (Mk 12:44).

Whoever does not live the detachment of temporal goods lives full of one's self, and cannot love. In such a state of soul there is no “room” for others: no compassion, no mercy, no care for one’s neighbor.

The saints set an example. Here is a fact from the life of St. Pius X when he was still bishop of Mantua. A merchant wrote slanderous accounts against the bishop. Many of his friends advised him to sue the slanderer, but the future Pope replied: “That poor man has more need of prayers than of punishment.” He did not accuse him, and instead prayed for him.

But it did not end there. After a while, the merchant's business went badly, and he declared bankruptcy. All the creditors descended on him, and he was left with nothing. Only one person came to his aid: it was the bishop of Mantua himself who, anonymously, sent an envelope with money to the merchant, letting him know that the money came from the most Merciful Lady, that is, from Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Do I genuinely live in detachment from earthly realities? Is my heart empty of things? Can my heart see the needs of others? “The Christian's program —the program of Jesus—is “a heart which sees”” (Benedict XVI).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “A charitable house will never be poor” (Saint John Vianney)

- “The Lord calls us to a Gospel lifestyle marked by sobriety, by a refusal to yield to the culture of consumerism. This means being concerned with the essentials and learning to do without all those unneeded extras which hem us in” (Francis)

- “All Christ's faithful are to "direct their affections rightly, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect charity by the use of worldly things and by an adherence to riches which is contrary to the spirit of evangelical poverty.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2545)