

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."

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Today, the Gospel presents Jesus Christ as the Master, who speaks to us about the detachment which we must live by. In the first place, a detachment of our honor and recognition which, every so often, we are looking for: "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 prevents us from following the bad example of the scribes.

In the second place, detachment of material things. Jesus Christ praises the widow while regretting, at the same time, the deceit of the others: "For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed

all she had, her whole livelihood.” (Mk 12:44).

He who does not live the detachment of worldly things does live full of his own ego, and is incapable of loving. In such a state of mind there is no “room” for others: neither compassion nor leniency or understanding towards our neighbor.

Saints provide us with examples. Here is a fact of Saint Pius X’s life, when he still was the bishop of Mantua. A merchant wrote slanders against the bishop. Many friends advise him to sue the slanderer, but the future Pontiff replied: “This poor soul is more in need of prayer than of punishment.” He did not indict him, he prayed for him.

But that was not the end of it; after a while, this merchant went bankrupt. All creditors fell on him, and he lost everything. Only one person helped him out: it was the very same bishop of Mantua who, anonymously, sent him an envelope with some money, by saying that it was coming from the most Compassionate Lady, that is, from Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Do I truly live the detachment of the earthly realities? Is my heart empty of things? Can my heart become aware of others’ needs? “The program of a Christian —the program of Jesus— is a ‘heart that sees’” (Benedict XVI).