GOSPEL

Luke 16:1-13

Jesus said to his disciples: 'There was a rich man and he had a steward who was denounced to him for being wasteful with his property. He called for the man and said, "What is this I hear about you? Draw me up an account of your stewardship because you are not to be my steward any longer." Then the steward said to himself, "Now that my master is taking the stewardship from me, what am I to do? Dig? I am not strong enough. Go begging? I should be too ashamed. Ah, I know what I will do to make sure that when I am dismissed from office there will be some to welcome me into their homes."

'Then he called his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, "How much do you owe my master?" "One hundred measures of oil," was the reply. The steward said, "Here, take your bond; sit down straight away and write fifty." To another he said, "And you, sir, how much do you owe?" "One hundred measures of wheat," was the reply. The steward said, "Here, take your bond and write eighty."

'The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness. For the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light.

'And so I tell you this: use money, tainted as it is, to win you friends, and thus make sure that when it fails you, they will welcome you into the tents of eternity. The man who can be trusted in little things can be trusted in great; the man who is dishonest in little things will be dishonest in great. If then you cannot be trusted with money, that tainted thing, who will trust you with genuine riches? And if you cannot be trusted with what is not yours, who will give you what is your very own?

'No servant can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.'

REFLECTION OF POPE FRANCIS

18 September 2022

The parable in the Gospel of today's liturgy (cf. Lk 16:1-13) seems a bit difficult to understand for us. Jesus tells a story about corruption: a dishonest manager who steals, and then after being discovered by his master, acts shrewdly to get out of the situation. We ask ourselves: what is this shrewdness — the one who uses it is corrupt — and what does Jesus want to tell us?

In this story we see how the corrupt manager ends up in trouble because he took advantage of his master's goods. Now he must give an account, and he will lose his job. But he does not give up, he does not resign himself to his fate and does not play the victim. On the contrary, he acts immediately with shrewdness, he looks for a solution and is creative. Jesus uses this story as a way to put before us an initial provocation: "The sons of this world", he says, "are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light" (v. 8). It happens, that is, that those who move in darkness, by certain worldly standards, know how to get by even when in trouble, they know how to be more shrewd than others. Instead, Jesus' disciples, namely ourselves, sometimes are asleep or naive, not knowing how to take the initiative to find ways out of difficulties (cf. Evangelii gaudium, 24). For example, I am thinking of times of personal or social crisis, but also of ecclesial crisis: sometimes we allow discouragement to overcome us or we start to complain and play the victim. Instead, Jesus says we could also be clever in following the Gospel, awake and attentive to discern reality and creative to find good solutions for us and others.

But there is another teaching that Jesus gives us. Indeed, what is the shrewdness of the manager about? He decides to give a discount to those who are in debt, and so they become his friends and he hopes they can help him when his master fires him. Before, he was accumulating wealth for himself, but now he uses it — in the same way: by stealing — to make friends who can help him in the future. Jesus, thus, gives us a teaching on how we use material goods : "Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you

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into the eternal habitations" (v. 9). To inherit eternal life then, there is no need to accumulate goods in this world, but what matters is the love we will have expressed in our fraternal relations. This therefore, is Jesus' invitation: do not use the goods of this world only for yourselves and for your selfishness, but use them to create friendships, to create good relationships, to act with charity, to promote fraternity and to show care for the weakest.

Brothers and sisters, even in our world today there are stories of corruption like the one in the Gospel: dishonest conduct, unfair policies, selfishness that dominates the choices of individuals and institutions, and many other murky situations. But we Christians are not allowed to become discouraged, or worse, to let go of things, remaining indifferent. On the contrary, we are called to be creative in doing good with the prudence and the cleverness of the Gospel, using the goods of this world — not only material but all of the gifts we have received from the Lord — not to enrich ourselves, but to generate fraternal love and social fellowship. This is very important: creating social friendship through our behaviour.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?

Head: hat does it mean to be "shrewd" in a Gospel sense, and how is it different from worldly cunning?

Heart: When you think about how you currently use your time, money, and talents, what does it reveal about what matters most to you?

Hands: If you had to "invest" one of your gifts today — your skills, resources, or influence — to create something that will still bless people a year from now, what would you do and who would you involve?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (for example, "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.