

Riches: Blessing or Curse?

“If the Lord has gifted you with riches, it is in order to do lots of good things for others in His name” (Pope Francis Tweets, August 28, 2018)

The Eucharistic celebration- the highest form of prayer, is a special moment in which God speaks to us through different ways, namely, the songs, the prayers, and the readings. The word of God, we experience through these means, is meant to encourage the good we do and challenge us to overcome the weaknesses of our lives. This change cannot happen if we do not have the disposition to participate fully in the liturgy. It is this worthwhile disposition to the word of God that makes it “living and effective,” as our second reading points out clearly.

The personification of wisdom in the first reading flows from the book's background, which is the brainchild of King Solomon. The early part of his kingship shows how he chose wisdom over riches (I Kg 3: 5-14). Thus, the exact reflection on riches and wisdom that connects us to Jesus' seemingly impossible analogy in Mark's gospel today; “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom.” In the context of this gospel, one may conclude that Jesus detests riches and sees it as a curse than a blessing. Is this true? No! Rather, Jesus wants to bring to our awareness the destructive dangers of riches, which do not in any way undermine the blessings they bring.

Jesus wants us to reflect on two things about riches: How we acquire them and how we use them. These two things determine if riches become a blessing or curse to us. First, we have to ask ourselves: What we have, small or big, how did we acquire them; were they acquired justly or through crook or hook? (1 Timothy 6: 6-10). Second, how do we use the riches we have acquired? Do our riches make us arrogant and proud? (1 Corinthians 4: 7). Are we unduly attached to riches (as the young man in the gospel) that we evaluate our lives by what we have than who we are? Are we wasteful and extravagant or stingy and mean with our riches? Do we remember that the more riches we have, the more opportunities to win God's blessings with them? (Luke 16: 19-31). We pray that the good Lord will give us the wisdom to acquire and use properly the riches he has given us so that they become for us sources of blessing and not curse. Amen.

“For all their riches, if mortals do not have wisdom, they perish like the beasts” (Psalm 49: 21).