

THE THINGS YOU HAVE PREPARED, WHOSE WILL THEY BE? - Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi OSM

Lk 12.13-21

At that time, someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?"

And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'

And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

With shrewdness, wit, irony and sarcasm that are typical, the evangelist Luke deals with an age old theme: the inheritance.

There is nothing like an inheritance to divide people. Let's listen to chapter 12, 13. Jesus was talking of the trust in the Father and is interrupted by one who puts trust in money. *"Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher... "* he turns to him with an imperative tone. *"...tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."* As we have already said it is the oldest question in the world, the inheritance. Inheritance is always the cause of divisions and disagreements, because there will always be someone

who expected more, who wanted more. And this will cause enmity and often disagreements that can last forever.

To Jesus every aridity is the result of greed and selfishness, attitudes hopelessly close to man and to God, so any inheritance, being motivated by selfishness, because if a person could be generous not having accumulated so much power to leave in inheritance, containing a toxic factor that poisons the lives of those who receive it. So you think you do good leaving an inheritance and instead it is harmful, delivering a poisoned fruit that eventually will bring its disastrous results.

And Jesus rejects. , *"Man,.... "*, when Jesus uses the word "man" it is always negative, *".. who made me a judge or arbitrator..."* (Literally divider , because he had asked that the brother divides with him) *".. over you?"* And here is Jesus' severe warning of to be taken into consideration.

"And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness,..." the desire to possess. St. Paul in the letter to the Colossians chapter 3, says that covetousness is idolatry. He could be the most religious, most pious, most devoted person in the world, but if he accumulates money, has a desire to own, is viscerally and deeply selfish he is an idolater, and has nothing to do with the Father, because the Father is love that is generously shared.

"Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." The values of life of a person do not depend on what he has, but on what he gives. Jesus' teaching in the gospels is that you have only what you are capable of giving; what you keep to yourself you do not own, but it owns you.

And now Jesus tells a fatal parable. *" And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully,..."* So the person is rich and even has an abundant harvest.

".. and he thought..." (watch out for Jesus' irony !) *"..to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'"* The rich man, the rich are terminal ill with selfishness for which there is no hope of any salvation, because they must be generous, but they, because they are rich, are not. The rich man does not even think of giving or sharing. He is already rich and has made an abundant harvest; he does not think " who can I give and share this with ?" He thinks only of himself. Everything is due to the rich.

"And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones,..." Here we see greed. *".. and there I will store all my grain and my goods."* And here again this theme of goods, possessions.

" And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." He thinks only and exclusively of himself. Not the slightest hint of solidarity, of sharing, he is already rich, and has an abundant harvest. *" it will cost nothing to give to others!"* No , the rich man , as I have already said, is terminally ill with selfishness for which there is on hope.

And here is God's sentence. Keep in mind, in Jesus' time, a rich person considered himself blessed by God, while the poor person was punished. *" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"*

Jesus had said before that he had thought to himself, and yet does not think of himself. The rich man is not only terminally ill with selfishness for which there is no hope. But he is also a fool. He had accumulated so much that he cannot enjoy it for himself. He will die and who will get all that he has accumulated?

And Jesus concludes: *'So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.'* How does one become rich with God? Giving to others. Jesus in the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke says that there is more joy in giving than in receiving, the secret of happiness does not consist of what you receive, what you own or in what you accumulate, but in what you give and share generously with those in need.