



My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In this week's Gospel, a wealthy young ruler kneels before Christ, "*Good Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?*" (Matthew 19:16) Jesus restates the commandments: "*You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Matthew 19:18-19). However, we see the man's pride: "*All these I have observed; what do I still lack?*" (Matthew 19:20)

Our Lord knows that his wealth has fed his ego: "*If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me*" (Matthew 19:21). The young man leaves, saddened. When Christ tells the disciples that "*...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God*", they are disturbed, asking, "'Then who can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and

said, '*For men it is impossible, but for God all things are possible*'" (Matthew 19:23; 25-26).

In the Epistle, St. Paul speaks movingly of his receiving the Gospel: "*For I handed on to you... what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins... and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters... Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am... On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe*" (I Corinthians 15:3-11).

There is an interesting parallel between the ego of the rich young man & St. Paul. As a follower of the Pharisees & a persecutor of the Church, Paul was honored by the world. Only when he allowed himself to be humbled ("*For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle...*") did God's grace truly began to work in him. This ultimately is the message of the Gospel: as Christ died, so we must, like St. Paul, crucify our own desires, if we wish to become perfect. Indeed, this great struggle will occupy most, if not all our lives. Turning back to the Gospel, even if we begin, not by abandoning all our possessions, but strengthening our hearts through acts of charity, love and kindness, we too can quiet our egos and be better able to hear and feel God's grace.

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