



## **To be poor or to be rich?**

Poverty must be carried with humility as well as wealth

A delicate subject, no doubt. Contradictory at least in appearance, difficult to put into words that conform to everyone. For some, it is worth that "it is easier to pass a camel through the eye of a lock, that between a rich to the Kingdom of Heaven." For others, it is worth that "the richness or poverty of a soul is in the spiritual aspect of the term, not in the material." In one way or another, the Sacred Scriptures give references that could feed a variety of interpretations, especially when the interested has some particular angle that he wishes to prioritize.

That way, those who consider themselves "rich" will try to find in this writing justification for their wealth. And those who consider themselves "poor" will seek to find here comfort and promise of "automatic salvation." Neither the one nor the other. It is not that the spirit of the various words that Jesus has left us on this delicate subject in the Gospels.

The first step is to understand whether material wealth is synonymous with almost certain soul condemnation. We remember the case of the rich young man who wants to follow the Lord, and Jesus puts him as a requirement to leave behind goods and honors, and he sadly lets the savior away, while he remains tied to his wealth. Also, the case of the rich who do not give nor the remains of his food to the poor who asks at the door of his house. In many opportunities, Jesus has marked the spiritual danger that material goods carry. Yes, it looks like a very narrow hole for the famous camel to pass.

But meditating on this matter I remembered those who were Jesus' best friends on earth. They were most likely three brothers: Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Lazarus, sons of Teofilo. Perhaps the richest family in Palestine at that time, in properties in Jerusalem, in Bethany, and many other places. Bethany's house was Jesus' favorite resting place when he ascended to Jerusalem. To Lazarus and his sisters, Jesús asked for many material favors when they came to Him desperate cases of people who needed help. And the brothers always responded, faithful to the Messiah they

had recognized in that Man of Galilee.

Yes, the children of Teofilo were rich, delicious, but they knew how to deserve the friendship of the Lord. Jesus cries when he saw the tomb of Lazarus, and made of his resurrection the most impressive miracle, in date already close to the Golgotha. His sister, Mary Magdalene, had the honor of being the first person to see him Resurrected. That's an honor, isn't it? Nothing is narrated by chance in the Gospels, so that so particular friendship among the richest family of the place, and Jesus must have a profound meaning.

Reading a beautiful book titled "The Word Continues" I found this phrase: "The rich who gives with love and true charity, is the one that makes himself love and not envy of the poor." In this way, accept their wealth from an honest work of the parents, or of one's worthy effort, is not a sin if it is accepted to make good use of it. Of course, the wealth based on money achieved by bad arts does not have much room in front of God. But wealth inherited or accomplished with dignified work is a manifestation of God's will upon us. The case is what God expects us to do with those gifts, because without a doubt, it is much the good that, like Lazarus and his sisters, can be done from a good economic and social position, acquired legitimately.

Seeing things like this, the camel can go through the keyhole, but with a responsibility and an effort that make the task very difficult. Wealth seems thus to assimilate to a cyclopean test for the soul, beyond that it configures a great gift, a grace that God grants. The great question of life that rich people must do is what to do with the goods that God has put in their hands.

If wealth faces us with such spiritual tests, is poverty a gift from God? It is, it is a very great help that God gives to find true humility and simplicity in the heart, fundamental gates for the way to holiness. Is poverty synonymous with salvation? No doubt that not. A priest friend told me that while it is remarkable the pride of the rich, is also shocking the pride of the poor.

I stayed a long time thinking in his words until I understood what he meant resentment and contempt for those who have something that one does not have, whether material, cultural or even spiritual. Being poor and living bitter about it is as bad spiritually as being rich and not making use of what is received for the good of others. In both cases, it falls into a life away from the love that God expects from us.

Poverty must be carried with humility as well as wealth, making the shortcomings gratitude that God does not subject us to the proof of abundance. A difficult task, isn't it? It sounds harder than the job of the rich, to make good use of what was received. However, I believe that spiritually speaking, the rich have it more difficult than the poor. But in any case, it is in each soul to know how to make the situation that we have to live, a unique opportunity to honor God with love and true humility

of heart.

If being poor or being rich, are matters of this material world in which we live, very remote issues from the destiny of true royalty that awaits us. Riches in this world, paths that drive us away from true wealth, if we do not know how to use them for the benefit of others. Poverty and misery in this world, a suffering that can help us to find the narrow path to the kingdom if we accept them with the joy of heart and make of it a motive for the union to the Poverty of the Resurrected.

Jesus had a very intense union with poor, sick and helpless, and a deep friendship with some rich but kindly. But above all, let us not forget that those who sent him to the cross were the rich of the place who did not accept that the Lord would come to alter his power and comfort, his material wealth, his dominion over the poor. And you, rich or poor, what do you do with it?