



(ZENIT, Vatican City, May 19, 2016).- Drawing from today's forceful reading from the Book of James, which asserts that "the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud," Pope Francis likened those who exploit the poor to bloodsuckers.

According to Vatican Radio, the Pope at daily Mass in Casa Santa Marta today considered both the correct attitude toward money and the falsehood of the so-called "prosperity Gospel."

"Riches in themselves are good," the Pope explained, but they are "relative, not absolute" goods.

He criticized the so-called theology of prosperity— according to which "God shows you that you are just if He give you great riches," saying those who follow it are mistaken.

Attachment to wealth is like a chain that takes away "the freedom to follow Jesus," he said.

"When riches are created by exploiting the people, by those rich people who exploit [others], they take advantage of the work of the people, and those poor people become slaves. We think of the here and now, the same thing happens all over the world. 'I want to work.' 'Good, they'll make you a contract, from September to June.' Without a pension, without health care... Then they suspend it, and in July and August they have to eat air. And in September, they laugh at you about it. Those who do that are true bloodsuckers, and they live by spilling the blood of the people who they make slaves of labour."

Grave sin

Pope Francis recalled how a young girl once told him about having found a job, working 11 hours a day for 650 euro a month, paid under the table. And they told her, “If that’s ok with you, take it; if not, get lost. There’s nothing else!”

These rich people, he said, “grow fat on their riches”—but the Apostle warns: “You have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter.” “The blood of all these people that you have sucked,” and on which “you have lived, is a cry to the Lord, it is a cry of justice. The exploitation of the people,” the Pope said, “is today truly a form of slavery.”

“We might think, he continued, that slaves no longer exists: they exist. It’s true, people no longer go to Africa to capture them in order to sell them in America, no. But it is in our cities. And there are these traffickers, these people who treat the working people without justice.”

“Yesterday, in the Audience, we meditated on the rich glutton and Lazarus. But, this rich man was in his own world, he didn’t realize that on the other side of the door of his house, there was someone who was starving. But this is worse. That rich man, at least, did not realize, and left the other man to die of hunger. But this is worse. This is starving the people with their work for my own profit! Living on the blood of the people. And this is a mortal sin. This is a mortal sin. And this demands a great deal of penance, a great deal of restitution, in order to be converted from this sin.”

The Pope also told the story of the death of a miser. The people joked: “The funeral was ruined,” they said. “They couldn’t close the coffin,” because “he wanted to take all that he had with him, and he couldn’t.” “No one can take their riches with them,” the Pope said.

“We consider this drama of today: the exploitation of the people, the blood of these people who become slaves, the traffickers of people—and not just those who deal in prostitutes and children for child labour, but that trafficking we might call ‘civilized’: ‘I’ll pay you this much, without vacation, without health care, without... everything under the table... But I will become rich!’ May the Lord make us understand today the simplicity that Jesus speaks to us of in the Gospel of today: a glass of water in the name of Christ is more important than all the riches accumulated through the exploitation of the people.”

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Readings provided by the [US bishops' conference](#):

Thursday of the Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Reading 1 [JAS 5:1-6](#)

Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries.
Your wealth has rotted away, your clothes have become moth-eaten,
your gold and silver have corroded,
and that corrosion will be a testimony against you;
it will devour your flesh like a fire.
You have stored up treasure for the last days.
Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers
who harvested your fields are crying aloud;
and the cries of the harvesters
have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.
You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure;
you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter.
You have condemned;
you have murdered the righteous one;
he offers you no resistance.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 49:14-15AB, 15CD-16, 17-18, 19-20](#)

R. (Matthew 5:3) Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!

This is the way of those whose trust is folly,
the end of those contented with their lot:
Like sheep they are herded into the nether world;
death is their shepherd and the upright rule over them.

R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!

Quickly their form is consumed;
the nether world is their palace.

But God will redeem me
from the power of the nether world by receiving me.

R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!
Fear not when a man grows rich,
when the wealth of his house becomes great,
For when he dies, he shall take none of it;
his wealth shall not follow him down.

R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!
Though in his lifetime he counted himself blessed,
“They will praise you for doing well for yourself,”
He shall join the circle of his forebears
who shall never more see light.

R. Blessed are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of heaven is theirs!

Alleluia [SEE 1 THES 2:13](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Receive the word of God, not as the word of men,
but as it truly is, the word of God.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel [MK 9:41-50](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:
“Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink
because you belong to Christ,
amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,
it would be better for him if a great millstone
were put around his neck
and he were thrown into the sea.

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.
It is better for you to enter into life maimed
than with two hands to go into Gehenna,
into the unquenchable fire.

And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off.
It is better for you to enter into life crippled
than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna.
And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.
Better for you to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye

than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna,
where *their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.*

“Everyone will be salted with fire.
Salt is good, but if salt becomes insipid,
with what will you restore its flavor?
Keep salt in yourselves and you will have peace with one another.”