

28th B October 11, 2015

How hard it is to hear this Gospel passage! How irritating it is to be told to give everything to the poor! Am I right? Amen?

OK. So, I give you ten reasons why these words of Jesus are nonsense and should be ignored.

10. I am middle class, not wealthy. The wealthy ought to give more.

9. If I give away everything to the poor, then I will be poor!

8. If everyone buys fewer and fewer possessions, then companies will close and people will lose their jobs.

7. I need to leave money to my children and grandchildren!

6. There are plenty of jobs if people want to work instead of living off the government. In fact, St. Paul wrote, "If anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that person eat."

5. So Jesus is saying that people who earn money should give it to those who don't earn money?

4. Once I gave a panhandler some money, then saw him get into a nice car.

3. I can't be sure my gift will even go to the people who really need it!

2. People are probably poor because of alcohol or drugs, or they mismanage their income.

1. I have never really talked to a poor person in my life. To me, they aren't people; they are a category.

Ten perfectly good reasons why we can ignore the teaching of Jesus Christ in Mark 10.

And I can think of only one reason why we ought to give our possessions to the poor, and it is this: *it's what God wants. God's will is that those who have more, have an obligation to help those who have less.* That is all over the bible, and all over church teaching since the beginning. And God's will is more important than my opinion. I myself have to deal with that. We all do. It is not an optional part of being Catholic.

Pope Francis says, "I want a poor Church, for the poor." Does the pope give us an example worth imitating? Here in the US, Francis traveled in a little Fiat—but he did not walk. In New York City, he sat down for a meal at a homeless shelter—but he did eat. Before the trip, he bought a new pair of glasses and told the optometrist, "I don't want to spend much money"—but he did buy a new pair. In the Vatican, the Pope lives in a very simple room—but he does not sleep outside.

The only person I know of who gave everything away and became a beggar himself was also named Francis. Back then in Assisi, Francis was called "loco"—crazy. Today he is called "Saint."

So, the Pope tries to live the Gospel as best we can. So do we. We try to do God's will. Try to put God's will above our own opinion. Try to help others. Don't be attached to stuff. It's hard.

But the years are going by, and sometimes I wonder: when we die and meet Jesus, what will be his first question? Did you go to Mass? Did you swear? Did you have nasty or dirty thoughts?

Or will Jesus ask, "What did you do for the least of my brethren?"