



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Money helps, Covetousness kills

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Pope Francis commented on the day's Gospel passage taken from St Luke (12:13-21), in which a man asks Jesus to tell his brother to divide his inheritance with him. The Lord responds to the request with a parable about a rich man who, in the abundance of his wealth, contemplates new ways of storing up his earthly treasure, only to discover that his life would be taken from him that very night.

The parable illustrates the problems often caused by an attachment to money, the Pope said. "How many families have we seen destroyed by problems over money: brother against brother; father against sons!". He continued, "when a person is attached to money he destroys himself, he destroys his family".

However, the demonization of money is not the answer, the Bishop of Rome noted: "Money contributes greatly to many good works for the development of the human race". The real problem is a distorted use of money, attachment and greed. Hence the Lord's warning: "Take heed and beware of all covetousness" (Lk 12:15).

The Pope explained that covetousness and the constant ambition to have more and more money

“leads to idolatry” and ends in destroying “our relationships with others”. It causes man to become spiritually ill by leading him into a vicious cycle in which his thoughts are consumed by money.

Covetousness is so dangerous "because it takes us down a road opposed to the one God has traced out for man". Indeed, quoting the Apostle Paul, the Pontiff said: “Jesus Christ, though he was rich made himself poor in order to enrich us”. There are two roads man can take: “God's road of humility, of bending down to serve” or “the road of covetousness, which ends in idolatry”.

Pope Francis noted that this is why Jesus speaks so forcefully about the attachment to money: “for example, when he tells us: ‘you cannot serve two masters’ or when he exhorts us ‘not to worry, for the Lord knows what you need’; or again when he leads us to trustful surrender to the Father, who makes the lilies of the field grow and feeds the birds of the air”.

The attitude of the rich man in the parable stands in sharp contrast to this attitude of trust in divine mercy. The rich man could only think about the abundance of grain he had harvested and the goods he had accumulated. As Pope Francis pointed out, “he could have said to himself: ‘I will give this to someone else in order to help them’. Instead, covetousness ruled his thoughts and led him to say: ‘I will pull down my barns and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods’”.

Covetousness, the Pope added, is an attitude that conceals the ambition to attain a kind of “idolatrous divinity”. The rich man's own words bear witness to this: “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry”. However, the Pope noted, this is precisely when God leads him back to the reality of his utter creatureliness. “Fool! This night your soul is required of you”.

“The road [of covetousness] is foolishness” Pope Francis said, “for it leads us away from life; it destroys human brotherhood”. In contrast, the royal road the Lord paved for us “is not a path to poverty for poverty’s sake” but rather “an instrument so that God might remain God and the only Lord” of our lives.

Pope Francis concluded, praying: “May the Lord's word remain in our hearts today” for “even if a man has an abundance of wealth, his life does not consist in his possessions”.