



My Beloved Ones,

In this Sunday's Gospel, a wealthy young ruler approaches Christ, "...*kneeling and saying, 'Good Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?'*" (Matthew 19:16) Jesus encourages him in 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).

It is here that 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, and so, answers him, "*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 at the idea of losing his possessions. Christ does not condemn wealth, but this young ruler allowed money to distort his sense of reality. 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*" (Matthew 19:23), He speaks knowing the true purpose of money: for our needs, and for the benefit of others; not to become greedy, or to spend to excess.

In the Gospel for next Sunday, the Sunday before Holy Cross, we learn the greatness of God's selfless love. In speaking with Nicodemus, Christ reveals the true purpose of His destiny to ascend the Cross: "*And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him*" (John 3:14-17).

My beloved, as we prepare to start the New Ecclesiastical Year, this coming Monday, September 1st, let us meditate on what we are called to do in imitation of Christ: freely give of our time, talents and treasures to serve others. And as we struggle to accomplish this journey to become more like our loving God every day, let us remember Christ's words to the disciples that "*For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible*" (Matthew 19:26). So long as we approach everything in our lives with the same kind of humility, charity and love, then we will be better able to overcome our flawed natures, and truly focus on Christ, who loves us so much, that He gave Himself up for our sakes

+SEVASTIANOS
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