

Fr Sosa - Homily at the Basilica of Loiola. International Association of Jesuit Universities. Deusto Assembly, July 2018

(Mt 19, 16-29)

Jesus' conversation with the wealthy – indeed, very wealthy – young man who wanted to follow him but who couldn't leave everything behind, left his disciples confused.

“Wealth” symbolizes and includes all the attachments we gradually develop as we go through life. Jesus is not making a statement here about wealth as such – whether it is a good thing or not – but rather about attachment to riches. Freedom from attachment is the first condition for laboring together in the mission of Christ.

From being confused, the disciples then move into a kind of negotiation. They realize that they have ready done what the Lord asked of the rich young man. Leaving everything behind, they are with him day and night. As a result, they expect some reward. “What about us?” Peter asks Jesus, speaking on behalf of them all.

They apparently had not listened to what Jesus told them at another time when they had been confused by his words - that the freedom needed to leave everything behind to follow him can't be produced by an act of will. Rather, that freedom is a gift from God. They understand the challenge the rich young man faced. Humanly speaking, leaving everything behind to follow Jesus is impossible. They realize that they've done that but don't understand how. They don't realize that it was through the grace of God, for whom nothing is impossible.

Jesus' response to the rich young man is echoed in a meditation in the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises, in the call of the Jesus the Eternal King. Those who leave everything to follow me, says Jesus, will share in my very life. The gospel language of the twelve thrones means that Jesus' followers share in his responsibility for redeeming humankind - which is why they will be sent forth to all corners of the earth throughout the ages. His words shed light on what we try to express with terms such as companions in mission, as this least Society which collaborates in the mission entrusted to the Church.

For those who have left everything behind for him Jesus's message is clear: they will find themselves in the company of many others who have taken this same step, and they will all collaborate in the mission of living and announcing new life. What makes us collaborators in Jesus' mission and companions with each other is detachment, the fact that we can leave everything in order to root ourselves deeply in Christ.

The Society of Jesus wants to take that step and become a collaborative apostolic body made up of companions in a mission of reconciliation and justice. When we think about that, it seems impossible. And indeed it is – unless we open ourselves wholeheartedly to the grace of God, who can bring about what looks impossible to us.

Today we have not merely said that we want to grow in the collaborative aspect of our work as an apostolic body, sent to labor in the world higher education. We have also chosen to do that in a very concrete way, by means of the International Association of Jesuit Universities. We know very well the difficulties and the struggle that that involves. Within the Society we have discussed such an organization for years. And now we have come up with a way forward, and taken the decision to act.

As we listen to message of the Gospel, we need continually for the grace of internal freedom, so that we can leave everything to become – with everything that we are – good fellow-workers in the gospel mission of reconciling all things in Christ.

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