

When we look at Jesus on the cross, we see the perfect gift of Himself — an offering of love in poverty, chastity, and obedience, which capture the very heart of His sacrifice. In poverty, Jesus gave up everything, owning nothing, even surrendering His very life. In chastity, His heart was undivided, totally given to the Father and for the salvation of the world. In obedience, He prayed in Gethsemane, “Not my will, but yours be done, Father.” On the cross, Jesus held nothing back. And this is where we always begin — with Jesus. He is our reference point for how we are called to live. We may not be able to give ourselves as perfectly as He did, but He remains not only our inspiration, showing us the way, but also our source of strength when we are faced with the difficult demands of discipleship.

Poverty, chastity and obedience are referred to in the Catechism as “evangelical counsels;” they detach us from

worldly goods, selfish desires, and our own will, so that we may be free to love God and others completely. They are not simply lofty ideals for a chosen few — they are the way in which all of us will live the virtue of charity perfectly in heaven. In eternal life, we will be perfectly poor because we will realize we need nothing besides God. We will be perfectly chaste because our hearts will be completely filled with His love, leaving no room for disordered desires. We will share in perfect communion with one another, loving each other fully in God. We will be perfectly obedient because our will shall be completely aligned with God's will. This life, then, is an exercise in preparing for that reality — learning to loosen our grip on the things of this world so that we might be ready to receive the fullness of life with Him and with one another forever. Those in consecrated life — monks, nuns, and religious brothers and sisters and all those in other forms of consecrated life — imitate this

offering most closely, living out poverty, chastity, and obedience here and now as a witness to the Kingdom, and a reminder to the rest of us of our ultimate calling to eternal life. But the evangelical counsels are not theirs alone. They are the calling of every Christian, in every state of life, to some degree.

Today's readings help us understand why they matter so much. In Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth reminds us that all our striving "under the sun" — our work, our wealth, our sleepless nights of worry — ends up as "vanity of vanities," if these pursuits are our ultimate priority. We cannot cling to the things of this world as if they can save us. They cannot. Only God can.

The rich man in today's Gospel never learns this lesson. He fills his barns with grain but fails to fill his heart with love. It never occurs to the rich man to spend his wealth alleviating

the poverty of others or strengthening the relationships with those whom he loves (if he even has anyone to love). His attitude is selfish: “my harvest,” “my barns,” “my grain and other goods.” He fails to realize that in the end, nothing belongs to us, all is gift. The rich man’s true poverty is his spiritual poverty, a life lived for himself, without generosity toward God or others.

Jesus doesn’t condemn productivity or hard work. As Cardinal Schönborn points out, “Jesus said a good deal about good and successful business activity. The best-known example is his parable of the talents. One man has been given 5 talents and another 2 talents. Both of them are praised for having succeeded in doubling this capital (Mt 25:14-30) .”[1]

Hans Urs von Balthasar takes us to the heart of the matter: the rich man confuses “having” with “being.” He stores up

treasure “for himself,” rather than realizing that his very being is meant to rest in God. Our possessions are not the purpose of life; they are only tools. When we make them the goal, we lose sight of the One who is our true treasure.[2]

So what do we do with all this? How do we live poverty, chastity, and obedience in the world today? Most of us are not consecrated religious. We have jobs, mortgages, families, and responsibilities. But Jesus calls all of us, no matter our state in life, to practice detachment — rather than clutching our possessions tightly, he demands that we hold lightly to the things of this world and use them for love, not self-indulgence.

We don't know when God will call us home. But when He does, may He find that we have not just filled our barns, but that we have filled our hearts — with love for Him and for one another. That is the treasure that matters to God.

1. Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, *Jesus the Divine Physician: Encountering Christ in the Gospel of Luke*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 108.
2. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Light of the Word: Brief Reflections on the Sunday Readings*, trans. Dennis D. Martin (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 336.