



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

**CATECHESIS PREPARED BY THE HOLY FATHER
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[[Multimedia](#)]

**Cycle of Catechesis – Jubilee 2025. Jesus Christ our Hope. II. The life of Jesus. The encounters 4.
*The rich man. Jesus looked at him (Mk 10:21)***

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today we will look at another of Jesus' encounters, narrated by the Gospels. This time, however, the person encountered does not have a name. The evangelist Mark presents him simply as "*a man*" (10:17). He is a man who has observed the commandments ever since his youth but who, despite this, has not yet found the meaning of his life. He is searching for it. Perhaps he is one who has not yet truly made up his mind, despite his appearance as a committed person. Indeed, beyond the things we do, our sacrifices and successes, what truly counts in order to be happy is what we carry in our heart. If a ship has to set sail and leave the port to navigate in the open sea, it can be a wonderful ship, with an exceptional crew, but if it does not pull up the ballast and the anchors that hold it down, it will never manage to depart. This man has made himself a luxurious ship, but he has stayed in the port!

As Jesus makes His way through the street, this fellow runs up to Him, kneels before Him and asks: "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (v. 17). Notice the verbs: "what *must I do to have* eternal life". Since observance of the Law did not give him the happiness and security of being saved, he turns to the Master Jesus. What is striking is that this man does not know the vocabulary of gratuitousness! Everything seems to be owed. Everything is a duty. Eternal life is for

him an inheritance, something that is obtained by right, through meticulous observance of commitments. But in a life lived in this way, although certainly for good purpose, what space can love have?

As always, Jesus goes beyond appearances. While on the one hand this man sets out before Jesus his fine resume, Jesus goes beyond and looks within. The verb that Mark uses is very significant: "*looking at him*" (v. 21). Precisely because Jesus looks within each one of us, He loves us as we truly are. Indeed, what will He have seen inside this person? What does Jesus see when He looks within every one of us and loves us, despite our distractions and our sins? He sees our fragility, but also our desire to be loved as we are.

Looking at him, says the Gospel, He "*loved him*" (v. 21). Jesus loves this man before He even extended the invitation to follow Him. He loves him just as he is. Jesus' love is gratuitous: exactly the opposite of the logic of merit that has beset this person. We are truly happy when we realize we are loved in this way, freely, by grace. And this also applies to the relationships between us: as long as we try to buy love or beg for affection, those relationships will never make us feel happy.

The proposal Jesus makes to this man is to change his way of living and relating with God. Indeed, Jesus recognizes that inside him, as in all of us, something is lacking. It is the desire we carry in our heart to be loved. There is a wound that belongs to us as human beings, the wound through which love passes. To overcome this lack we do not need to "buy" recognition, affection, consideration: instead, we need to "sell off" everything that weighs us down, to make our hearts freer. There is no need to continue to take for ourselves, but rather to give to the poor, to provide, to share.

Finally, Jesus invites this man not to stay alone. He invites him to follow Him, to be within a bond, to live a relationship. Indeed, only in this way will it be possible to emerge from his anonymity. We can hear our name only within a relationship, in which someone calls us. If we remain alone, we will never hear our name spoken, and will continue to be that "*man*", anonymous. Perhaps today, precisely because we live in a culture of self-sufficiency and individualism, we find ourselves more unhappy because we no longer hear our name spoken by someone who loves us freely.

This man does not accept Jesus' invitation and stays alone, because the ballast of his life keeps him in the port. His sadness is the sign that he has not managed to leave. At times, what we think are riches are instead only burdens that are holding us back. The hope is that this person, like each one of us, will sooner or later change and decide to set sail.

Sisters and brothers, let us entrust to the Heart of Jesus all people who are sad and undecided, so that they may feel the loving gaze of the Lord, who is moved by looking tenderly within us.

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