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## Wealth and Discipleship

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### *Abstract*

Wealth and Discipleship were often considered incompatible. Discipleship necessitates and lays emphasis on taking stance in every sphere of life including social, political and economic. Denial of self and following of Jesus involve a renunciation of all attachments to material possessions. The essence of discipleship is self sacrifice. Therefore, a disciple's attitude towards wealth and its ownership needs to be vigilantly monitored. In Lk 14:33 Jesus clearly says, "none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions". Detachment and renunciation are essential elements of discipleship. A genuine disciple of Jesus should be ever ready to make sacrifices to assist the underprivileged to ensure justice and bring institutions of power under better democratic control. God is for all and God created everything for all.

### **Introduction**

Discipleship entails the following of Jesus the leader. Being disciple demands and necessitates taking stance in every sphere of life including social, political and economic. Considering the contemporary understanding of discipleship against the stark realities of the present day society, in which the gap between the rich and the poor is widening, genuine discipleship is a challenge. It calls for an extraordinary gallantry in the profession of faith and its practice, especially with regard to the earthly possessions. Continuous modifications and transformations set in our attitude and behaviours on account of our social involvements

and interactions. A disciple's attitude towards wealth and its ownership needs to be vigilantly monitored. A genuine disciple of Jesus should be ever ready to make sacrifices to assist the underprivileged to ensure justice and bring institutions of power under better democratic control. God, the creator is the true owner of everything. The individual's attitude towards earning, owning and disposing wealth is very much influenced by the culture of the community. This article is an attempt to decipher how the teachings of Jesus affect the day to day life of a disciple in the third millennium. We also look at the way the Fathers of the Church understood it and transmitted it to us and its relevance in our time.

We, Christians living in are in the third millennium, are called to uphold to the ideals and values of Christ in our respective spheres of life. This has been a perennial challenge. In the midst of stress and strain of modern technocratic society, people are in tight spot. Christians, especially the religious, are obliged to bear witness to their convictions, while they are constantly tempted to lead a life heedless of their promises. This is a universal phenomenon visible in all realms of life. Therefore it is the need of the time to understand the identity and dignity of a disciple of Christ. Today the Church is fully aware of this and its serious obligation to transform from within every profile of human life with the power of the Gospel. This obligation necessitates a serious reflection and critical assessments of the way disciples of Christ, especially the religious, live in this present world.

Since the religious live in the world, they need to develop a discerning disposition towards the realities they encounter, while upholding a creative fidelity to the Gospel values and engaging in a counteractive praxis against the evils existing in the society. A renewed vision of discipleship and its demands, especially regarding the possession and use of wealth is vital. In a highly secularized world of today the identity of the religious is particularly challenging. It is challenging because it affects the person's life radically if he/she is to be sincere in his/her search for truth and objectivity. It is an undeniable fact that the validity of religious life is to be seen and appraised on the basis of its relationship to Jesus Christ. In other words, the basic idea of being a religious is contained in discipleship. Attaining maturity is the goal of discipleship. It necessitates continuous formation and transformation. Let us now consider the meaning and singularity of discipleship.

## The Terms Disciple and Discipleship

Hebrew, Syriac, and Greek languages have their own particular terms to elucidate the concept of discipleship. The Hebrew equivalent for disciple is *talmid*, which is derived from the Hebrew verb *lamad* which means 'to learn' and hence the term *talmid* means learner or pupil. (ISBE Vol. 1.1988). The Syriac term for disciple is *talmida* in masculine *thalmidsa* in feminine. The Greek term for 'disciple' is *mathetes*, which come from the verb *manthanein*, 'to learn'. Hence *mathetes* means 'a learner', and discipleship may be a more lasting relationship of a 'pupil' or an 'apprentice' to his teacher. In classical Greek literature *manthanein* denoted the process of acquiring theoretical knowledge and *mathetes* was the one devoted to Greek Philosophical School. Another Greek term related to discipleship *akolouthein* means 'to follow after' (Puthuserry, Jeevadhara, 56, 1980:94). In the New Testament, the words connected to discipleship are applied to the followers of Jesus and describe the life of faith. The word '*akoloutheo*' denotes the action of a man, answering the call of Jesus whose whole life is redirected in obedience.

## Historical Development of Discipleship

The concept of discipleship is nothing exclusive to Jesus Christ or Christianity. Term corresponding to disciple is seen twice in the Old Testament: 1Chro 25:28 and Is 8:16. Since Judaism is a religion of revelation there is not much space for the establishment of a teacher-disciple relationship. In Judaism the word is used "exclusively for the one who gives himself as learner to the Scripture and to the religious tradition of Judaism" (Rengstroff, TDNT Vol. IV, 432). In Judaism the word is used only for men because culturally women were of a lower level and were neither allowed to learn from a rabbi nor to teach. The term *talmid* is also used as an honorary title. However, throughout the scripture we find various aspects of discipleship. The word disciple repeatedly occurs in the New Testament especially in the Gospels and Acts. In all these cases the term implies the existence of a personal attachment to the teacher.

## Gospel Understanding of Discipleship

The concept of discipleship in the New Testament is centered on the person of Jesus, his mission and his preaching of the kingdom of God. Jesus presented himself as a rabbi of his time, taught, discussed and was asked to make legal decisions and his followers were called disciples. For this reason Jesus' discipleship has certain similarities to the rabbinic discipleship. However, a closer look exposes some drastic differences between the two. At several decisive points Jesus went beyond the

recognized limits for a rabbi. This gives new colour and vigour to the disciple – Master relationship in the New Testament.

### **Main Characteristics of Discipleship**

The call in its simplest form gives a new understanding of discipleship. The disciples of Jesus were a circle of followers who were commissioned to a particular service. Renunciation (Mt 23:7), humility (Mt 18:1), poverty (Mt 19:23) and readiness to suffer are the characteristics of Christian discipleship. Another distinguishing characteristic of the Gospel's notion of discipleship is that the initiative is from Jesus. The call comes from Jesus. That is the starting point. Jesus called the first disciples (Mk 1:16-20; 2:17; Mt 4:18-22) and the call is 'to follow' him or 'come after' him (Lk 5:27; Mt 4:19). The call comes to every one without any regard for one's status or state of life. Jesus called the fishermen, the tax collector, a rich young man (Mt 19:22), an anonymous disciple (Lk 9:61), and any one (Lk 14:26). However, initiative from Jesus does not mean that Jesus should personally and explicitly call all disciples. In the forth Gospel it is very clear that the first disciples are coming to Jesus as per the direction of John the Baptist.

### **Discipleship Involves Breaking Away from the Old Ties**

The response of the disciples was immediate (Mt 1:18-20; 2:14). Those who accepted and responded to his call 'followed' him (Lk 5:11; 5:28; Mt 4:21). Their response was an act of obedience involving a total break with their occupation and families. Luke says "They left everything and followed him" (Lk 5:11). This implies the total renunciation of one's way of life. Looking back is no more possible for the disciple (Lk 9:62). Like an athlete who never looks back at the ground he has covered, instead focus the finishing post, the disciple of Jesus leaves behind the associations and ties of the past and their former achievements.

Both the call and response are acts of grace. This Gratuitousness calls for greater responsibility. Disciples of Jesus were with Jesus and he was their sole mentor. Thus the one who answers Jesus' call and reorients his/her whole life 'to follow' him is called a disciple. Acceptance of the call involves recognition and faith in the person of Jesus and his mission (Jn 2:11), commitment to him (Lk 5:11), without counting the cost (Lk 12:33). It is the beginning of a new life, losing one's old life (Lk 9:23-25) and finding a new life in the family of God through doing the will of the Father. Jesus wants to remove anything that gets in the way of a personal relationship with Him. The way of Jesus leads to suffering and cross. So anyone who follows Jesus must walk the way of the cross (Lk 14:25-27; Mk 8:34).

Love is the keynote of discipleship in New Testament. The reciprocal love within the community is the criterion of the discipleship of Jesus for those outside (Jn 13:35). The circle of disciples of Jesus, who love one another, forms a new world within the world. This love is grounded in the love of God. Sociologically describable aspects of this discipleship are renunciation of possessions, abandonment of all social and family ties and readiness to be wandering preachers carrying the message and power of Jesus. However, discipleship is not merely an individual venture - though it involves personal commitment and engagement in spiritual disciplines. Discipleship is a group activity - best done in community. From a human perspective, to sell one's possessions to meet the needs of others was folly. It is necessary to be financially prepared to face the future. The disciples of Jesus find their personal security within the wellbeing of the community and therefore, dare to make available their resources to meet the needs of others.

### **Jesus and His Women Disciples**

In the discussion about Jesus' disciples we have to face a serious objection. In spite of Jesus' gallant actions, which went beyond contemporary consciousness, he called no women into the circle of the twelve. Jesus' constitution of the twelve was a symbolic act. However, we must bear in mind that Jesus' circle of disciples consisted not merely the inner circle of the twelve but also the outer circle of numerous groups of disciples (Lk 6:13-17). In this group five women who followed Jesus and supported him with their belongings are also known by name: Mary Magdeline, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Susanna, Mary the mother of James and Salomy (Lk 8:1-3; Mk 15:40-41). Departing from the rabbinic guidelines Jesus allowed Mary to sit at his feet and even dared to teach both Martha and Mary (F.B Craddock, 1990: 152). Mk 15:40-41 reports at the end of the crucifixion scene that Jesus was accompanied by women disciples. These female disciples remained faithful in their following of the master till the very end of the Gospel story.

### **Radical Nature of the Call and the Cost of Discipleship in the Gospel of Luke**

Luke speaks about radical discipleship. This radicalism is multidimensional. From the general perceptive of discipleship found in the New Testament, now we shall focus on the discipleship described in Luke's Gospel. Each Gospel writer wanted to say something special about Jesus and accordingly selected materials and arranged them in such a way to highlight his unique perspective. Firstly let us consider the call accounts in Luke to see the basic requirements of discipleship and then deal with the teachings on discipleship in his journey narrative.

The disciples are called with an unconditional, absolute, person centered call to 'follow me' (5:27; 9:59). They are called not to die with Jesus but to take up their cross daily and follow him (9:23). Jesus' obedience to his Father is the model for his disciples.

### **Call Narratives in the Gospel of Luke**

There are eight call narratives in the Gospel of Luke. Right at the beginning of the Gospel we come across a call, the call of Mary to collaborate with God's plan (Lk 1:26-38). Mary accepted the invitation and responded to it as a model disciple. The remaining seven calls emphasize the initiative of the Lord and the need for detachment. Though all synoptic Gospels narrate the call of the first disciples, a close analysis gives some peculiarities in Luke's narratives. In Luke, the call comes after Jesus' preaching and teaching in Galilee for several days (Lk 4:14; 4:31; 4:43-44). The first disciple called by Jesus responds with a confession of his sinfulness. This implies the awareness of one's own sinfulness and unworthiness is not an impediment to discipleship, but a prerequisite. The promise given to Peter, that "you will be catching human beings" (Lk 5:10) is a reminder of the missionary responsibility included in the call. The disciples must bear in mind that as in the miraculous catch of fish, so in the capturing of men for the kingdom, the plan and method are designed by God. The only thing required of the disciples is total cooperation with the plan and program of God. Be with Jesus means not only physical accompaniment but also an intimate personal attachment to Jesus. Here the recognition of one's own sinfulness and unworthiness is not a hindrance, but rather a prerequisite. Discipleship brings upon a missionary a radical stance towards possessions. According to Mark, the disciples 'left their nets' but according to Luke, the disciples 'left everything' in order to follow Jesus. There is a communal dimension also to discipleship.

Discipleship of Levi indicates a forsaking of all in order to follow Jesus. Luke alone notes that he leaves everything to follow Jesus. Here we see that in the calling of the disciples Jesus broke the social barriers separating the righteous and the sinful. At the same time those who were called had to break the barriers of their old life through total conversion. In other words, our positive response to God's call involves a complete change of direction in life. It is the result of faith in Jesus. It implies turning away from one's previous life styles and journeying with Jesus. Nothing short of a total commitment shall make one a true disciple of Jesus.

The mission of the twelve shows a deeper stage of discipleship. The twelve are given power and authority before being sent to preach and heal. Total dependence on God and radical detachment from possessions are demanded from the twelve. Differing from the first call, here Luke adopts a sweeping attitude towards possessions. May be like Peter and Levi, the other disciples might have 'left everything'. Luke places more importance to use Jesus' own words like, "take nothing for your journey" (Lk 9:3), or take no sandal or staff while the disciples set out for their missionary journey (D. M Sweetland, 1990:31).

Though discipleship demands urgency it is not something undertaken on impulse. It is a most solemn obligation and nothing has priority over it. In order to be a true disciple one should be ready to come out of one's comfort zone and forsake the security of settled home life. Disciples must overcome all obstacles to follow Jesus. They have to renounce home and family ties for the sake of Gospel. Their only security is God and their only home is God's Kingdom. Only a person who is open to whatever comes can be a true disciple of Jesus (Schweizer, 1984:172). In other words, discipleship demands complete renunciation of possessions and consecration, prompt obedience and firm determination.

The call and mission of the seventy two explain the universal nature of the mission entrusted to the disciples. The instruction to the seventy two informs us about the mode of life of the disciples. First of all they are to set forth their journey without a kit as a sign of their faith and trust in God that He will supply what they need. Secondly they are not allowed to greet anybody on the way means to concentrate on their task. Thirdly, the disciples must not be profit oriented. They are to be content with whatever food and drink is set before them and must not move from house to house seeking better and more comfortable quarters. It means that the servant of a crucified master cannot be a seeker of luxury. Jesus instructed them to be the messengers of peace. For Luke peace means salvation. Woes on the impenitent shows the seriousness of accepting or rejecting the disciples, and through them Jesus and God. To have heard God's word is a great responsibility and a disciple will be judged according to the opportunity he/she had to know the word. It is a terrible thing to reject God's invitation. Reception of the message leads to greatest glory. Therefore the disciple's task is both glorious and dreadful. The group's commission is followed at once by the account of their return. All of them returned with joy; there is no note of failure or disappointment. In his answer to them Jesus intends to correct their faulty view and warns them against pride and over-confidence. The disciple's greatest glory is not in what he/she has done, but what God

has done for him/her. The themes derived from these passages are relevant to missionaries of all times.

The firm and forcible words of Jesus in his general invitation to discipleship (Lk 14:25-35) presents the requirements of discipleship. The most important condition is detachment from oneself and one's having. The expression 'hate' in Lk14:26 appear to be a contradiction to Jesus' all-embracing love commandment. But Jesus used this expression to stress the point that true disciples must renounce anyone or anything that stands in the way of thorough commitment to Jesus (L. Zanchettin, 1999:183). Jesus says "whoever wills to come after me, let him deny himself". It is a self giving and self forgetting, like dragging a cross for one's own execution. It is a denial of oneself, or one's ability to control one's own life. It is the eradication of self-interest. Self renunciation is accomplished by the continuous taking up of the cross. Thus the essence of discipleship is self sacrifice. Denial of self and following Jesus also involve a renunciation of all attachments to material possessions. In Lk 14:33 Jesus clearly says, "none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions". This is precisely a Lucan text. What is demanded of the disciple is that in the network of many loyalties, in which all of us live, the claim of Jesus takes precedence redefining every other loyalty. In the light of Lk 14:27 the call of sharing the mission of Jesus necessarily leads to sharing the same destiny of Jesus. The way of Jesus leads to suffering and cross. Anyone who follows Jesus must walk the way of the cross. Luke alone speaks about the daily cross bearing. It involves the voluntary self denial and sacrificial living in the service of God (F.B Craddock, 1990:130).

The last periscope in Luke's Gospel in which Jesus explicitly calls one to follow him is the challenge to the rich ruler (Lk 18:18-30), who rejected the invitation. The periscope shows that the disciple of Jesus must take a radical stance toward possessions and must be prepared to abandon the values of this world in order to be a disciple of Jesus and to gain eternal life. Detachment from earthly goods is necessary to a strong attachment to heavenly things. The ruler stumbled because he thought that he could attain eternal life by fulfilling the law. But God is concerned about our interior disposition than the external observance of the law. Thus we can conclude that discipleship is a divine call to holiness and wholeness. A disciple is the one who responds positively to the message of Jesus with repentance, conversion, radical renunciation of possessions and co-operation with other members of the society to carry on the mission of Jesus.



## Teachings about Discipleship in Lucan Journey Narrative

There is a series of teachings found in the Lucan journey narrative. The main teachings are about the characteristics of discipleship such as love, prayer, forgiveness, simplicity, humility and suffering. According to Luke discipleship is open to a person who is open to the love commandment. There is no dichotomy between the commands to love God and love one's neighbour. They are the two sides of the same coin. The intimate pairing of the love of God and love of neighbour constitutes the specificity and the uniqueness of the teaching of Jesus. God is the source of love and our love for neighbour is a consequence of our experience of God's love for us. Being with God in contemplation is an act of love. In the episode of Martha and Mary, Martha sought to honour Jesus with service and material gifts rather than spiritual communion. The Lord, who often warns that mere hearing of the words is of no profit, advised Martha, that Mary has chosen a 'good part'. This good part is fellowship with God in Jesus, which is expected from the disciple rather than hospitality. The contemplative experience of God as the Father leads to the experience of neighbour as the brother. The parable of the Good Samaritan demonstrates that the needy brethren take the focus of attention than the official duties and authorities of a disciple.

Discipleship is characterized purely and simply as following the footsteps of Jesus which leads to the cross. All throughout Luke's Gospel the suffering of Jesus is inextricably linked with glorification. It is an incentive for the disciples to give witness fearlessly in the face of persecution. Jesus would accept the cup of suffering his one desire was to accomplish the will of the Father. The disciples also want to accomplish the Father's will at any cost. Through the rejection and suffering of Jesus and through the instructions and warnings given to the disciples Luke painstakingly says that suffering is an inevitable part of true discipleship. For a disciple, suffering is not for the sake of suffering, but it is the royal way to glorification. But the disciple could not walk through the way of suffering with his own strength. Instead he has to depend totally on God to understand the meaning of suffering.

## Discipleship and Prayer

Luke gives particular importance to prayer in the life of our Lord and in the life of disciple. Jesus is the model of disciple's prayer. For Jesus prayer is a father-son relationship and it is a means to know and to do the will of the Father. Jesus told that in disciple's prayer they ought to call God 'Father' which means that true disciple must have the 'Abba

experience' and as a result they should have the awareness of sonship. Jesus taught that one should pray for the coming of the kingdom, daily bread, forgiveness and protection from temptation. The disciple must pray for the accomplishment of the kingdom of God, his dominion over human life and existence and the fulfilment of it with the collaboration of man. The petition for 'daily bread' is a plea to supply the physical needs of the disciples as well as the gift of God or divine benevolence which crowns our labour. The disciples should pray for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus grounds the disciple's request for divine forgiveness in his/her own practices of extending forgiveness because mercy flows through the same channel whether being given or received. The practice of forgiveness of Jesus' followers is a manifestation and imitation of God's own character. Temptation represents a danger to faith, the danger to falling away. The disciple's awareness of his own weakness and the great power of evil animate this prayer. Jesus was tempted and disciples must also undergo temptations. Hence Jesus advises his disciples to ask God for help in facing the temptations of daily life. Lk 11:5-8 depicts that the disciple must pray with confidence, persistence and determination. Humility is an essential condition for the disciple's prayer. If one acknowledges one's own poverty, then he/she will be eager in prayer and God grants such prayer. The right attitude in prayer is to approach God, acknowledging his omniscience and omnipotence as God and his goodness as the Father.

### **Role of Forgiveness and Humility in Discipleship**

A radical interior change is necessary to accept Jesus or to be a disciple. The positive dimension of forgiveness is to do good to the ungrateful and wicked. Thus forgiveness is the first step of unconditional and universal love of all men. Jesus challenged the disciples to forgive without keeping count of offences. The disciple must place himself at the service of the very least (Lk 9:46-48). It is serving not ruling that makes a man great. When Jesus' disciple lowers him/herself and serves others he/she does it in imitation of Jesus. Lack of humility is the most dangerous temptation in the life of a disciple. It prevents one from the depth of God's love for us and it leads to self righteousness.

### **Discipleship and Wealth**

Simplicity and humility lead to detachment, renunciation and sharing which are related to wealth. Jesus taught the disciples about the responsibility of riches. He illustrated how its use affected the earthly life as well as eternal life. Discipleship is a life style of fellowship, in which wealth, one of the gifts of God has an important role to play. The

parable of the rich man and Lazarus underscores one of the dangers of riches namely 'the presumed blindness of the needy neighbour'. The parable of the rich fool highlights another danger namely self-centeredness and the desire to have more and more. In the parable of the rich fool the man forgot that harvest is the gift of God to serve his brethren, sharing joy with them. He did not share the gift with the needy brother and it became a great curse for him. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus suggests the high position of man. Gate is a symbol of giving and receiving, through which fellowship emerges. Faith in the providence of God is leading the disciple to share and being fellowship with others. Then wealth becomes a means to create a world without needs, which is the expected new world with everlasting peace and joy.

Almsgiving plays a great role in the life of a disciple. Jesus requires that almsgiving be done with perfect disinterestedness, without any display of wealth or without expecting anything in return. Jesus taught that disinvestment and almsgiving based on commitment to the kingdom of God has the effect of embracing the needy as members of one's own inner circle and it is converted to heavenly treasure (Green, 1997:495-496). A treasure is something which one considers most dear and valued. Through the parable of the rich fool Jesus illustrates that how unsafe and foolish is to store up treasures here on earth. It is not the having of earthly goods that Jesus rebukes. We, disciples live here on earth and so we need earthly goods. Jesus forbids his disciples to have their treasure here on earth, it must be in heaven. Luke recommends the right understanding of earthly values, right use of the world's goods and a readiness to renounce all things for the kingdom of God. Having rejected decisively the call of wealth, disciples must orient their being totally to the service of God. Disciple's commitment to the kingdom should not be weakened either by the attraction of earthly possessions or by the anxiety about the means of livelihood. Discipleship calls forth a behaviour that would lead to the loss of social standing, identifying with the poor. The common understanding is that poverty is the consequence of laziness and wealth is the result of industriousness. But Jesus pronounces strong words of condemnation against the Pharisees love of money and gives a counter theology embraces not only the very rich, but also anyone who has wealth such as extra cloak or additional food to share.

The parable of the dishonest steward highlights the manager's dedication as an example of one who achieves and secures his own goal. This story which is exclusive to Luke might tell us about the need of dedication and resourcefulness in God's business. Here money is called

'tainted money' or 'unrighteous mammon', because it does not give us what it apparently promises and it deceives us. One cannot trust in it, build on it and have security in it. It cannot save its possessor from eternal damnation. For Luke wealth is not an evil in itself. What is to be avoided is the compromise between the service of God and wealth since wholehearted service of one excludes the other. So the duty of a disciple is to be clever in the good use of money entrusted to him and to be faithful in its administration. Possessions have a power to enslave their owners, and they become selfish and isolated from the community. It has severe consequences in the life after death. So those who are wealthy have great responsibility to use them for the benefit of others who are deprived of it. No one can have an absolute right to the things on earth.

### **The Patristic vision**

In the history of the Church there is a gradual change in the understanding of discipleship. In the post apostolic period discipleship was understood as a call extended to all Christians. They radically lived their commitment, especially during the years of persecution. The most important aspect of discipleship seen in the apostolic fathers is their attitude towards suffering and wealth. Detachment and renunciation are essential elements of discipleship. The practice of renunciation is all the more clear in the early Church. Is it the same in the later generations? It is beyond the scope of an article to summarize the relation between discipleship and wealth in all the later generation. The attempt made here is to concentrate and elucidate the teachings of three fathers, one from the group of Apostolic Fathers, second the representative of Alexandrian school and the third the representative of Antiochean School.

The early Church struggled for a correct understanding of the use of wealth by the disciples. The book 'Shepherd of Hermas', the longest and most remarkable one of the Apostolic Fathers, puts forward a substantial ethical teaching on wealth in the context of Christian life. The book brought out the idea that the wealthy person has a genuine place in the Christian community and a real function to fulfill. The disciples should use their wealth for doing good to all. But it warns the rich about vainly spending their resources for their own pleasure since God gave wealth to the rich not for luxury but they might come to the aid of the afflicted and of the widows and orphans (Ramsey. B, 1985). The rich are obliged to be witnesses of an all inclusive and all embracing love of Jesus. The existence of the poor in the world helps the rich to avoid the dangers of wealth and above all they were intended to deal justly

with the poor. In return for the assistance rendered, the poor will pray for their well to do brethren. Thus they prove that they are children of one father and fulfill the will of the Father. Even though it emphasizes fraternal charity, it praises renunciation of wealth which gives freedom from the bondage of all vanities of this earth. Renunciation is necessary condition of a person's full usefulness for God.

Clement gives the ethics of the passion and use of wealth in his work '*Paedagogus*' (Instructor) and another minor work '*Quis Dives Salvatur*' who is the rich man that shall be saved? Here Clement stresses the absolute religious and social obligations, which go with property. According to him "the Lord does not intend to exclude any rich man from the kingdom of heaven, he only commands us to mortify in spirit our attachment to the goods of this earth and to make good use of our possessions (Bardenhewer, 132). What Jesus demanded is that the heart must be cleansed of its desire for riches. Voluntary poverty is not yet completely identical with the freedom of man's dispositions damaging passions.

God is for all and God created everything for all. Therefore everything is common and the rich should not grasp the greater share. Everyone can use everything provided, use them without attachment or distinction. In view of Clement one who possesses and retains wealth is not wealthy, but one who gives his/her wealth is really wealthy person. One can be rich and poor at the same time, have possessions and not have them, use the world and not use the world. It is giving not receiving that makes one happy. Generosity, which is the product of the soul that makes one wealthy and true wealth, is in the soul (Wood S.P, New York, 1954). What we need is not a flight from the world, but a reasonable, moderate and generous use of worldly goods. In short the disciples are to go as they are and to not take provisions - just trust the Lord.

Chrysostom's teaching on the morality of wealth is given always in connection with the relationship between people having wealth and not having it. He protested against the unjust economic and social situation of his age. According to him wealth is not good or bad in itself. The merit of wealth depends on the mental disposition of the one who uses it. The disciple's disposition is to be that of service in which one places at the service of all, especially for the poor, one's resources and skills. In matter of private property he speaks of the need to eliminate oppression and poverty and to build a more just, more human social order. He emphasizes the solidarity of humankind. Being rich and being a slave of riches is different. Sharing and almsgiving are the greatest virtues that one should practice. Almsgiving is a means to wash our

souls from all iniquities. The disciples must always follow their master and imitate him. So they must be ever compassionate and ever merciful to the needy and be careful not to use force and fraud to deprive others of their basic rights.

The understanding of wealth as a gift of God, given to the disciple for the sake of the community has great influence in the teaching of the Church as well as for the renewal of the Church. The Church is a historical reality, living in this world, sharing its destiny. The remarkable feature of this modern age is change in structures, value systems and in sensitivity. The teachings about the relationship between the rich and the poor and the relationship of mutual dependence are almost ignored. There are probably more people in financial slavery today than our Earth has ever seen before. Still, although money is involved, this financial slavery is not connected to the amount of money people have. The relationship we have with our money (compared to our relationship with God) is what is important. This brings new challenges before the Church. The Church as the community of disciples of Christ has to respond to the new challenges critically, pastorally and redemptively. In a fast changing world the Church is called upon to renew itself from within as well as from without. In other words discipleship needs to be retrieved and personalized in ever new and relevant forms. Those who fail to keep abreast with new developments in various fields could feel lost when confronted with new structures and situations.

## **Conclusion**

How far is renunciation actualized in today's Church? Are we really aware of our duty and dignity? In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declares: "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom" (Mt 5:20). St. Paul says about the generous act of Jesus: "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2Cor 8:9). The general belief is that majority of religious congregations have always possessed wealth or have wanted to possess it. Property was principal cause of corruption. Jesus confirmed that people would be rewarded richly for anything they give up for Him and the gospel - now and in heaven (Mk 10:29,30). Jesus doesn't want us wealthy or poor, he wants us to follow Him. One thing that will really help is getting our financial life straightened out, so money is no longer a priority and we do not have to think about it all the time. What is the attitude in the deepest of our hearts? Are we trying to serve two masters? Are we ready to become poor in order to make others rich or are we make ourselves rich by all means?

It is high time that we should step down from our pedestals and take the whole Gospel seriously. Pope Francis is a true model and leader in this endeavour. With our Pope let us receive the gift of discipleship with gratitude and fulfill the task of it with our sincere service, love and simplicity. In the world of chaos and confusion, catastrophes and wars, through our very life let us produce the good fruits of peace and joy and prove that we are the true disciples of Christ.

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