

**Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost (Oct. 11)**  
**Mk 10, 17-30 (or shorter, 10, 17-27).**

## *Are you Good Enough?*

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In a speech given by a well known businessman, the rich were classified into the idle rich, the profligate rich, and the working rich. I should like to add another category, one that transcends each of those mentioned, and can be combined with them, namely, the pious rich. You can find this kind among the idle, the profligate and the industrious. The piety of the profligate rich is but a sham; that of the idle is very questionable; but something good might be said about the piety of the working rich.

The rich young man in today's gospel story belongs to the category of the working rich. He was an honest man. He did not kill nor hire goons to kill his enemies. He did not play around with women. He did not falsify documents. He was a dutiful son to his parents. He was a clean, honest to goodness pious rich young man, the ideal man, I am sure, for all of the eligible young ladies here present. By our usual human standards he was certainly an outstanding person.

But was he ready and willing to be a thoroughgoing follower of Christ? Was he ready and willing to renounce his riches and join the apostolic life of Christ? He could not measure up to this demand. He failed in the crucial test of piety: the test that required putting persons above things, putting intimate friendship with Christ above abundance of material possessions.

It is indisputable that the choice given to the rich young man was very special. Christ does not ask each and every rich man to renounce all his possessions. But what is important to note is that the rich young man's choice revealed a distorted sense of values. For him, riches were more important than the company of Christ, whereas a correct sense of values would reverse the judgement.

The pious rich, especially if they belong to the category of the working rich, are often good people. But very often they are not good enough. If you think of goodness simply as consisting of obedience to the Ten Commandments, then you will find many good people even among the rich. But Christianity supersedes the Ten Commandments. Christianity sets up a standard that requires Christians to put persons above things, personal values above material goods. Measured by this standard, the rich very often fail to be good enough. There is nothing that blocks christianization more effectively, or nothing that leads to dechristianization more rapidly, than the way of life of the rich, a way of life that gives tremendous importance to things and relegates persons to secondary place. What rich man is not constantly appraising his real estate, his investments, his revenues? When choosing his friends, he prefers those who can help his business rather than those who can enrich his spirit; when trying to please his wife, he will think of buying some expensive gift for her, instead of finding out how to conform to her moods and satisfy her psychological needs; when planning for the education of his children, he will spend more time in choosing an expensive school, than in arranging his schedule so that he can give more time to them and share with them the wonderful discoveries that reveal God's presence in nature and in persons. Even when praying, his petitions will be for the success of his enterprises and the protection of his interests, rather than for growth in love and union with God. The rich man, therefore, even when pious, is in danger of missing the boat to eternal life.

The rich young man was pious. He was good. But he was not good enough. Many rich people, young and old, are pious, good. But are they good enough? In order to be good enough, they must work and pray so that they may always put personal values above material goods, and friendship with Christ above everything else.