

## The Poverty of Christ (13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

### 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15

<sup>7</sup> Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us—see that you excel in this gracious work also... <sup>9</sup> *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich...* <sup>13</sup> I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, <sup>14</sup> but that *as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, that there may be equality.* <sup>15</sup> As it is written, “*He who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack.*” (2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15)

1. Divinity: “Jesus Christ” was “rich” (8:7) = divine
2. Humanity: “for your sake he became poor” (8:9) = human
3. Almsgiving: “abundance” of Corinthians → supplies “want” of Jerusalemites (8:14)

<sup>25</sup> At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem with aid for the saints. <sup>26</sup> For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make *some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem*; <sup>27</sup> they were pleased to do it, and indeed they are in debt to them, for if the Gentiles have come to share in their *spiritual blessings*, they ought also to be of service to them in *material blessings*. (Romans 15:25-27)

4. Manna from Heaven: the moral typology of the manna (8:15)

<sup>16</sup> This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Gather of it, every man of you, as much as he can eat; you shall take an omer apiece...’ <sup>17</sup> And the people of Israel did so; they gathered, some more, some less. <sup>18</sup> But when they measured it with an omer, *he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; each gathered according to what he could eat.* (Exodus 16:16-18)

### The Living Tradition

Ambrosiaster: *Paul is saying that Christ was made poor because God deigned to be born as a man, humbling the power of his might so that he might obtain for men the riches of divinity and thus share in the divine nature, as Peter says [2 Pet 1:4]. He was made man in order to take man into the Godhead.* (Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on 2 Corinthians 8:9* [trans. G. Gray])

Basil the Great: If, then, we keep in reserve any earthly possessions or perishable wealth, the mind sinks down into the mire and the soul inevitably becomes blind to God and insensible to the desire for the beauties of heaven.... This, then, is renunciation... It is the transference of the human heart to a heavenly mode of life.... Also—and this is the chief

point—it is the first step toward the likeness to Christ, who, being rich, became poor for our sake. Unless we attain to this likeness, it is impossible for us to achieve a way of life in accord with the gospel of Christ. (Basil the Great, *The Long Rules* 8 [in G. Gray])

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection (13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. If Jesus Christ was a poor carpenter, how can Paul say that he was “rich”? When is Paul referring to? And when did Christ become “poor” for our sake”?

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### For Further Reading

1. Bray, Gerald, ed. *1-2 Corinthians*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VII. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999
2. Ambrosiaster. *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians*. Translated and edited by Gerald L. Bray. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2009.