Avarice

(This sermon notes are based on a series of teachings on the topic by Rev. Robert E. Baron and other sources as indicated)

AVARICE (from Latin avarus, “greedy”; “to crave”) is the inordinate love for riches. Its special malice, broadly speaking, lies in that it makes the getting and keeping of money, possessions, and the like, a purpose in itself to live for. It does not see that these things are valuable only as instruments for the conduct of a rational and harmonious life, due regard being paid of course to the special social condition in which one is placed. It is called a capital vice because through it many other sins are committed. It is more to be dreaded in that it often cloaks itself as a virtue, or insinuates itself under the pretext of making a decent provision for the future. In so far as avarice is an incentive to injustice in acquiring and retaining of wealth, it is frequently a grievous sin. In itself, however, and in so far as it implies simply an excessive desire of, or pleasure in, riches, it is commonly not a mortal sin. (Catholicexchange.com)

- Avarice is the unreasonable or immoderate desire for riches. (St. Thomas)

Is there a legitimate use of wealth?

Yes, the Catholic Social teachings of the past century consider wealth as a good thing. Private property is good. Just as political freedom is good, so also is economic freedom.

The entrepreneurial spirit is good. It brings creativity.

Profit is good. It means we are doing well.

So what is avarice – immodest and unreasonable desire – what makes it unreasonable?
Private ownership is good but how you use it makes the difference

**How do you use your property?**

Use it for common good – in your disposal of private property, the common good should be uppermost in your mind.

It has its roots in creation – God is the creator of all things. God created all things for the common use.

We are called to be the stewards of these things:

St. Ambrose of Milan: *If you have two shirts in your closet one belongs to you and the other belongs to the man who has no shirt.*

**Leo XIII:** The founder of the modern Social Teaching tradition

*Once the demands of necessacity and propriety have been met, the rest belongs to the poor.*

Cardinal George of Chicago:

*The poor needs you to draw them out of their poverty and you need the poor to keep you out of hell.*

Hell is can be experienced here; I live only for me, I refuse the mission

God gave us the poor to give us the opportunity to serve them and drag us out of the lake of hell. And find your mission

What, then, is avarice, this immoderate, unreasonable love of riches?

- *One that prevents you from seeing the common Good*
- *One that prevents you from giving generously*
- *One that prevents you from seeing that your wealth is given to you for serving God’s purposes*

The question to Ask if one is wealthy – how come God gave me so much wealth? How does God want me to use it creatively for his purposes?
Avarice is the refusal of the spiritual Sensibility when it comes to the use of wealth.

Example of the prodigal Son:

“Father, give me, my share of the inheritance coming to me”

It is a very insulting statement to the father.

In that couture, one did not inherit the family property while the father was alive.

Hurry up and die, I can’t even wait for you to die – me, me, me

He wanders off to the far country – (Greek: Cora Macra – the big empty space)

What we clings to wealth, ti creates fear. We will cling on to it to fill the big empty spaces in our life and we loose it.

Divine life is destroyed when we cling on to property.

Divine life increase when it is given away.

If you want your life, give it away.

The poor are there, so you can find your mission in life

Is money playing a big role in my life?

Do I compare my wealth with others?

How painful it is for me to let go off money

Your check book is a good spiritual tol. Go over it. Where did I spend money last month?

**Punishment/purification** – lying on hard floor face down – weeping for their neglect of the spiritual goods.

**Antidote – lively virtue?**

**Generosity**
The divine generosity – love that exists in the Trinity – The three Divine persons sharing generous love from all eternity. God is generous Love

Creation is not from need but from generous Love.

World is being made even now – in generous love.

**Practical Advice:**

- Give away your goods/wealth on a regular basis – make it smaller (Ambrose)
- Clean up your closet every month – give away
- When you want to buy something (Car, furniture) find the one you like and can afford and buy the one down and give the difference to the poor
- Put a poor box by your door – drop something in it as you leave the door
- Factor the common good into every one of your decisions

**Marion Counter Example:** She gives birth to the King of Kings in a dusty, dirty, smelly stable out of the simplicity and poverty born of her generous heart. (Contrast with Caesar Augusts in his palace)