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Knowing How to Be Rich

HIS BEATITUDE LIUBOMYR SPEAKS ON MONEY AND CHARITY

Interviewed by Nadia TYSIACHNA, *The Day*



The conversation about material wealth with His Beatitude Liubomyr (HUZAR), former head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church clearly suggested itself. Archbishop Emeritus [one already retired. – Ed.] has recently presented his second audio book *Suspilstvo i Biznes* (Society and Business) from the second trilogy *Suspilstvo* (Society). The first CDs had the title *Try Dorohy* (Three Ways), where, in fact, the author spoke about way to one's own self, one's neighbor, and to God. We think that the suggested issue has not yet been developed well. People more often speak about spiritual wealth. Besides, His Beatitude Liubomyr is not by chance called a sage of modern time – he can speak in a simple way about complicated matters.

“In the Gospel it says the words of Jesus Christ about that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God,” began His Beatitude Liubomyr

HUZAR. “This brings you to an absolutely logical question: is it a sin to live in prosperity? No, of course, not. Wealth in itself is not something bad. The only problem is that wealthy people, as a rule, feel so self-sufficient that they do not need God. In the new audio book I emphasize the statement that one has to know how to be rich! For example, those people could help orphans or sick people, or support culture. After all, they could create jobs by opening their own business. There is a great number of possible options.

“Unfortunately, there are many people (not only in Ukraine) who don't know how to use their wealth properly. Thus, many of our got-rich-quick men, so called new Ukrainians, don't know what to do with their property. They want to show off to others that they are some important people. In order to do so they build themselves a few stored mansions, drive luxury vehicles, and even fly on private airplanes... However, most of them stay shallow and often unhappy deep inside. Because, a truly rich person is rich not only with property but is also rich in spirit. Such person is aware of that his wealth is a God's gift. Besides, it is not the beginning of everything. Thus, for such a person other people are on the first place and he is able to treat them with respect.

“I remember, when I was a student I had a part-time job in a hotel in a resort area. My responsibilities included meeting people, when they checked in. There were different people there: millionaires, who, when asked to wait, did it patiently; middle-class representatives, who also showed politeness in unexpected situations; and got-rich-quick men, who would sniff just as they entered the hotel showing that they didn't like a thing about it – in one word, they acted out of line and you could tell right away who they were. Obviously, a truly wealthy person, especially those from wealthy families, unlike the ones who acquired their wealth just recently, is of high culture.

“Maybe children of our got-rich-quick men could become truly wealthy people – in soul, spirit, and money. Of course, if they will keep that legacy.”

Your Beatitude, you said that wealth is not a sin. What about strive to become rich?

"It is the same here. Especially, if a person has a gift for that. Not everyone is able to get rich in an honest way.

"We forget that in a normal society there have to be rich people.

"However, there exists a problem. Modern TV strongly propagates as an ideal a young, healthy, rich person, who can do whatever he pleases. Let's say an ordinary boy or girl watches a TV program of such kind and thinks: 'How great it would be to have lots of money!' Instead, they'd better encouraged young people to develop their talents, study one or two professions, and become competitive specialists."

Your Beatitude, you are one of the greatest moral authorities of our time. Many people have made attempts to win your favor. Some do it just for the sake of it and others – for covetous aims. Thus do you gladly receive donations from everyone or do you do it selectively?

"When someone wants sincerely to make a donation, I would gladly tell about the possibilities: Patriarchal Cathedral, other churches and monasteries, Ukrainian Catholic University, orphanages, hospitals, nursing homes... Then the person can make his choice. If the person asks to guide him saying that I know better who feels greater need at the moment, I do it. But if I realize that this person wants to bribe me, I immediately deny.

"I will frankly tell you that I have never accepted gifts for myself. What do I need? I have roof above my head and my plate is not empty. Ok, I need to buy medicine regularly, but, thank God, I have enough money for that. Do I want something bigger to show off to others: 'Look, I keep serious money on my account in a bank.' Do you think I'll be able to take it with me when I die? This is my philosophy."

Recently I have witnessed a complicated discussion about how to use dozens of thousands euro for surgeries on seriously ill children that would continue their lives for several months, a few years at most, when there are so many other ill people around who need help?

"Ukrainian Orthodox Church has many good radio programs. The host of one of such programs is the deacon Mykola Lysenko. At the end of almost every program he tells about the needs. For example, money is needed for a surgery for such and such child. Then he tells the phone number of child's parents. After some time he reports about the progress or the final outcome, thanking the contributors from time to time. I think, in other churches and in our society we have to follow this example. The question about whether it will be able to save a child's life and for how long will doctors be able to prolong their lives is secondary. God decides how long each of us should live. Sometimes there are prognoses for only a few months but a person lives for 20 years."

Since this fact has charitable nature and it is only a week left before Christmas, what would be your emergency recipes for kindness?

"For some reason we think that we show mercy when we help those in need: sick, homeless, and hungry people. There is no doubt that we should help them. However, I think that each of us needs mercy. That is why let's try to respect one another, say nice things to each other, and love each other... In one word, let's be humane.

"Recently, within the framework of social days held by our church I have visited Cherkasy. Answering questions there I suggested the following recipe: 'Every night dwell on what has God done for you today and then think about what you have done for others.' This will be a wonderful observance of the fasting and not only fasting."

Would you please make a short review of the passing year in social, political, and church spheres?

“As for church life, our circle of dialogue has been expanding. On December 1 the leaders of UOC, UOC-KP, and UGCC together made a statement on the situation in Ukraine.”

By the way, in your opinion, has public heard that statement?

“You, journalist, ask me about it? You’d have to be the one to inform me. (Laughs.) Between you and me, I think they haven’t yet. Very many important events are taking place in the same time, like, for example, the EU-Ukraine Summit. However, I think they will eventually hear it. In a few months we plan to have an all-Ukrainian round table. Besides, there will be local round tables held. We will discuss the situation and the way we should react to it. Those shouldn’t be merely intellectual and academic tasks. Our goal is to lead to changes. The only condition of church leaders is to do it in a peaceful way.

“What concerns the society itself, I am seeing presence of civil way of thinking more and more in people these days. They begin to understand that the state does not exist to give them something. The state is not capable of giving. Instead, we should take the responsibility and by common efforts achieve concrete results.

“Maybe some would consider the year 2011 counterproductive, but I am an optimist. With joy I notice those little changes on the way of our transformation from Soviet people into Ukrainians.”

Your Beatitude, what would your wishes be for the Ukrainian people in the New Year?

“To understand that God loves us!”

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