

28B

When it comes to trapping monkeys, African hunters have their own special way of doing it. Firstly, they would get a jar, tie some heavy object on to it and place it strategically high up on a tree. Then they would put a nut or some hard food which the monkey adores into the jar. The idea is that the adult monkey's paw would just fit into the jar to grab the food. But then, with the paw full of food, he wouldn't be able to pull it out, so he gets trapped. Of course, he could release the food and go free, but he stubbornly won't and so he easily ensnares himself.

The rich young man is in the same predicament. Jesus looks steadily him and loves him. But the love which Jesus has for him calls for a response which stretches beyond the keeping of the 10 commandments on which he prides himself. It has a rather hefty price tag attached. He invites this affluent 'twenty something' to sell everything he owns, give the money to the poor and finally become a disciple. In this way he'll have treasure in heaven. But for Him this was a 'bridge too far' so he leaves the company of Jesus a mighty sad man.

When it comes to securing a place in the world to come we can't afford to be clinging on too much to this one. That is precisely what this well-heeled young man was doing. Have you noticed that Meadowhall shopping complex has a dome resembling a place of worship? The temptation for shoppers, young and old is to worship all that money can buy. 'Shop until you drop', to me, sounds like a sure recipe for unhappiness. Like the rich young man you'll end up feeling empty and sad.

There is reference to priestly and religious vocations at the end of the gospel today when Jesus talks about leaving family, land and possessions to follow Him. I'm firmly convinced that the reason for the scarcity of vocations in the Western church is our overly materialistic way of life compared to the developing world where vocations are on the increase. Sounds like the

rich young man in today's gospel had a vocation but his wealth got in the way. We are not at all saying that we don't need money but turning it into a God or an object of worship will never bring fulfilment either in this life or the next.

Jesus gives us advice on the matter when he says: 'use money - that tainted thing - to win your friends, so that when it fails you they may welcome you into the tents of eternity'. Money is made round to go round and if we're mean with it then who'll be there to welcome us into Eternity. The Lord loves a cheerful giver. If we see all we own as a gift of God to be shared, not something we hoard solely for our own use, then I'm sure we won't be short of *welcomers* when we reach the eternal shores. Our 'treasure on Earth' will have translated into 'treasure in Heaven'.