

**26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in the Ordinary Time C**  
**The Poor are our Friends in Heaven**

Amos 6:1a,4-7; Psalm 146:8-9,9-10; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; Luke 16:19-31

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The poor are our friends in heaven.

Let us remember that when we turn a blind eye to helping the poor and become indifferent to their suffering, we overlook God's special love for those in need. This love is demonstrated through His unique care and concern for the less fortunate (cf. Prov. 14:31, Ps. 113:5-8, Deut. 15:11, Isa. 58:10, Matt. 25:40). The parable of the rich man and Lazarus vividly illustrates the irreversible consequence of being eternally separated due to such indifference.

The parable illustrates a wealthy man enjoying a life of luxury, indulging in the finest food and wine, while Lazarus, a man in poverty, suffers. Eventually, their fortunes are reversed: the rich man experiences misery while Lazarus finds wealth. However, we should not assume that only the rich are being reprimanded in this story. The audience Jesus addressed was poor by our standards, and the parable carries a message for them as well as for us today. This is a call to show fraternal care as part of the Gospel. If we love, we are called to share what we have and to spend our time helping those in need.

The story of the rich man in the Gospel suggests that he did nothing wrong in a direct sense. He did not beat Lazarus, nor was he deliberately cruel to him. However, his real failure was his lack of attention to Lazarus; he did not recognize him as his brother. This omission was his sin: he did nothing. How often do we find ourselves in the same situation? We may do nothing wrong in the conventional sense, yet we fail to act. The rich man faced consequences not for being wealthy or well-fed, but because he chose to ignore the suffering of his brother. He turned his back on the poor man standing at his doorstep and closed his heart to the human misery that was evident to him every day.

It's not just about whether a person has money, but about what often comes with it. The prophet Amos highlights the excessive self-indulgence of the economic and political leaders in the kingdoms of Judah and Samaria, especially those in Samaria. They are arrogant and indulgent, living in luxury with ivory-inlaid beds and couches in their dining rooms. They use the most expensive toiletries and feast on an abundance of the finest meats and costly wines. Their revelry can be heard from miles away, accompanied by music and song. Yet, they show no concern for others (cf. Amos 6:4-7).

Thus, the issue isn't merely whether we are wealthy, but rather how wealth affects our character. Wealth presents an opportunity for us to exercise charity and overcome selfishness, as illustrated by the story of Lazarus and the rich man. Lazarus offered the rich man a chance to show compassion and attain eternal salvation, but the rich man did nothing. Remember, our actions can prepare us for heaven while we are still on earth.

On the other hand, while we often focus on the first part of the story, it is equally important to consider the ending dialogue between the rich man and Abraham in the Gospel. The rich man had five brothers who were still alive, living in large homes and enjoying a lavish lifestyle. He asked Abraham, "Send Lazarus to my brothers, because if someone comes back from the dead, they will recognize him and be able to turn their lives around" (cf. Lk. 16:27-28). Abraham's response was clear: there is no need for that. They have Moses and the prophets, and they must pay attention to their words (cf. Lk. 16:31). If they won't listen to them, what is the point of sending another messenger?

The five brothers actually represent the audience—we who are listening to the story!

We are the siblings who are still alive. God's message is there for all of us to hear. The words of Scripture, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did it to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40), are not just a lesson but a call to action for each of us.

Nobody is exempt from the responsibility toward the less fortunate members of society. Wherever we look, there is sorrow to be comforted, needs to be supplied, pain to be relieved, and misery to be addressed. We cannot claim ignorance. Our mission is to support the poor and those in need. If God has chosen to grant us wealth, it is not because we are exceptional or deserving, but so that we may use what God has given us for the benefit of others.

Let us remember that the poor are our friends in heaven.

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