

## **26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary time C/2007**

Human life is a gift we have received from God through our parents and which has become what it is today, thanks to many people who have been influential in our growth and education and have contributed to the making of our life. Since we have received life as gift, we can but share it with others we meet from day to day and with those who live around us.

In the same way, all the goods we enjoy in this life, even those acquired through our hard work, are but God's gifts. For proof, we can just remember, as the book of Job says, that we were born with nothing, and we will die with nothing (Job 1, 21). From this point of view, it can be said that we are all equal. If it happens, however, that we emerge above the lot and have more because of our abilities, our familial heritage or the concourse of circumstances, it remains nevertheless true that everything is a gift. Because everything is received, everything has to be shared. That is the spiritual insight that crosses over all of today's readings.

Like in the first reading of last week, the prophet Amos denounces the indifference of those who care only for their pleasure and their own interest, while the country is going under difficult times. That is why, they shall be the first to go into exile and their revelry will be done away with. The "woe" of this message is addressed to all the indifferent rich of all the times and all the cultures.

The act of indifference constitutes the drama that takes place between the rich man and the poor Lazarus in today's Gospel. The parable does not say that the rich man was a bad guy, nor was he a mean person who mistreated Lazarus. His sin was that he never noticed Lazarus: he accepted him as part of landscape and thought it was normal that he should lie in pain and hunger while he was living in luxury. As it can be seen, the problem with the rich man was only that he was indifferent toward Lazarus; he literally ignored Lazarus while he was lying at his door with hunger and sores. The rich man's sin is not that he did something wrong, but that he did nothing. Maybe it is better to call that a sin of omission.

As a matter of fact, indifference makes someone insensitive and deaf to the cry of his fellow humans. It kills any prospect of solidarity toward the others. It prevents someone from seeing the others in their needs and pain; it keeps him away from others because he does not care, no matter what bad situation is happening around them. Consequently, indifference keeps someone away from God who identifies with the suffering and the needy (Mt 25, 31-46). We should never forget that by helping the needy we help God, by rejecting the needy, we reject God.

Sometimes I hear people say that hell does not exist. Unless they mean something else, they are mistaken. According to today's parable, hell is a place of isolation and torment in which people risk finding themselves at the end of their lives when they do not live in solidarity with their fellow humans. It is a possibility of losing our eternal life forever when we do not act according to the law of love of God and of our neighbor. The text says that it is a chasm we create for ourselves when we are indifferent to the misery of our fellows. That is what Abraham tells the rich man. What leads to that place is the way we live here on

earth. For that, we have to remember that the way we live on earth determines, to a large extent, our future life. It is not a question of living in fear or feeling guilty, but of taking seriously our commitment as Christians while we are still alive.

When we examine this text, we realize that the distance between Lazarus in heaven and the rich man in the netherworld seems not to be the result of God's judgment, but in reality a ditch that the rich man has dug for himself when he was still alive. The gap he has maintained on earth is maintained in heaven, but in a reversed order. What he has sown on earth, is what he harvests in the other world. In this sense, it is on earth that the fate of what comes after death takes place. Nothing can change it even the later regrets after we die.

This parable teaches us that solidarity, relationships and friendships are decisive-criteria for the life after death. In the parable, the rich man lives in loneliness surrounded by his goods, with no involvement with the poor. When someone dies we say that he is survived by his family and relatives. In heaven, what survive us are the relationships we have built with the needy and the poor.

The parable invites us also to conversion of heart. At times, what we can do for today we put off for tomorrow and, then, we miss the opportunity God gives us to get rid of our sins and receive eternal salvation. The words of Abraham to the rich man are so clear: If your brothers do not listen to Moses and the prophets, even if someone should rise from the dead, they will not listen. Here lies the drama of human stubbornness with regard to the word of God. The misfortune of the rich is due not only to the hardness of his heart, but also of his ears.

When the rich man thinks that when someone from the dead would talk to his brothers, they would change, he is misleading. The foundation of our faith is not in the apparitions, the revelations of angels or visions, but in the word of God. When we fail to listen to the scriptures, we prepare our eternal ruin. There is only one who came from the dead, Jesus Christ. We have to listen to him.

All that helps us understand what St Paul reminds Timothy to do in his ministry by pursuing righteousness, faith, love and gentleness. He concludes by recommending him to compete well for the faith and to keep the commandment without blame until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. These words are addressed also to us today; we better listen to them.

We pray that the Lord in his grace and the force of his Holy Spirit smooth our hearts so that we are able to listen to him and live in solidarity with one another, especially the poor and the needy. May God bless you all!



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**Amos 6, 1a. 4-7; 1Timothy 6, 11-16; Luke 16, 19-31**