

## **Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ord. Time C/2013**

The readings of this Sunday talk about the detrimental effects of selfishness. They show the type of drama that unfolds when people care only for themselves and have no concern for their fellows. They invite us to be sensitive to the plight of our fellows, especially of the less fortunate and the needy among us.

In the first reading, the prophet Amos denounces the attitude of the rich people of the country. He shows how their delight in luxury and complacency has made them insensitive to the ruin of Jerusalem. He shows also that misfortune will befall them, because they too will be struck by deportation and exile.

What is behind this text is the idea that selfishness and indifference are bad things. All those who practice them will be victim of their detrimental effects. Another idea is the truth that given that material possessions and wealth are gifts received from God, people should be sensitive to the fate of the less fortunate by living in solidarity.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus talks about the parable of the rich man and the poor Lazarus. The Gospel starts by describing the physical condition of Lazarus as poor, sick and hungry. It shows that the rich man ignored him, though he was sleeping at his door. It shows also that, in spite of Lazarus' desire to feed himself even with the scraps falling from the table of the rich, he could not obtain any.

In their death, however, their fate became different. While Lazarus went to a place of joy where he was with Abraham, the rich man went to a place of suffering and flames where he was in torment. At the sight of Lazarus in joy, he wanted some help from him, but he could not obtain any.

Struck by the contrast of their different fates, the rich man suggested that Abraham send Lazarus back to warn his brothers still alive so that they come to avoid the mistake he did and, thereby, the misery he had in that place.

But, Abraham did not concede to his demand. On the contrary, he reminded him how their lives were different on earth. He also told him about the chasm existing between the netherworld and the place where Lazarus was that prevented anyone to cross from one place to another.

As the rich man insisted that the sending of someone from the dead would be a compelling argument for his brothers, Abraham reminded him that those latter had Moses and the prophets to listen to. In that perspective, their incapability of listening to them would not change anything, even if someone would come from the dead.

What do we learn from this Gospel? The point I want to bring today is the drama of human indifference and the sin of omission. At the beginning of mass, we say, "I confess ... that I have greatly sinned ... in what I have done and in what I have failed to do". Perhaps, we just recite this prayer as a formula without measuring the whole impact of the words we use. Today's parable gives an opportunity to think about it.

In fact, what strikes in the parable is that the rich man is condemned in the other life while he did not do anything wrong. In truth, he did not harm Lazarus or mistreat him. Neither was he responsible for his situation. But, why is he now condemned as though

he was a criminal? Do not we say that “heaven helps those who help themselves”? Should not Lazarus do all his effort to get rid of his poverty?

According to the parable, the sin of the rich man is not about something he did do, but rather what he did not do. His sin is that of omission. He not only ignored Lazarus who was begging in front his house, but he also remained indifferent to his suffering.

In fact, indifference makes us insensitive and deaf to the cry of our fellows. It prevents us from living in solidarity with them. It pushes us to look only for our interests and to care only for ourselves. In the end, it keeps us away from God, who identifies himself with the poor and the needy.

Does it mean that we have to resolve all the sufferings in the world as though everything depended on us? No. the problem is how we position ourselves with regard to the needy and the poor, especially when it is possible to alleviate their suffering.

That is why the privation in which the rich man is in now is something he has created himself because of his sinful indifference. The way he lived on earth has resulted in what is happening to him now in the other world. In that perspective, we understand why the drama of our life starts on earth before being consumed in heaven.

What are the consequences of this vision? The first is the importance of the present time. As St Paul says, “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts”. In fact, today is a time of repentance and conversion, not tomorrow. Today is a moment God gives us in order to come close to him. It is an opportunity we cannot let go without doing anything for our salvation.

The second is the importance of the word of God. In fact, the word of God we listen to today is the foundation of our faith and the measure of our future life. That is why the rich man was wrong to think that if someone comes from the dead, his brothers will change. In the same way, our faith is not based on the apparition of phantoms, but rather on the word of God brought to us in the Church. To ignore the word of God and to count on a miracle in order to believe is a mistake, because our failure to listen to the scriptures can only lead to our eternal ruin.

Let us pray, then, that the Lord may help us to open our hearts to the sufferings of our brothers and sisters. Let us ask him to make us sensitive to the plight of our fellows in need and help them according to our means and skills. May God bless you all!

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



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