

Meditations: Sunday of the Twenty-Sixth Week of Ordinary Time (Year C)

Some reflections that can guide
our prayer during the 26th
week of Ordinary Time.

- Recognizing the needs of others
 - Opening oneself to God's mercy
 - Being more sensitive to suffering
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“THERE WAS A RICH MAN who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day” (*Lk 16:19*). Thus begins the parable of the rich man and the poor man Lazarus. The former enjoyed ostentatious abundance, while at the door of his house lived a man covered in wounds, who dreamed of being able to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. His situation was so desperate that he didn’t even have the strength to chase away the dogs that came to lick his wounds.

In this story of our Lord, the blindness of Dives is striking. He would have seen Lazarus many times, half asleep at the entrance to his house; he would even have disdainfully told his servant to move him aside so that his guests could enter. But he never stops to truly look at him. He is not willing to waste time with a person who cannot

bring him any benefit. “Lazarus, who is lying near the door, is a living call to the rich man to remember God, but the rich man does not heed this call.”^[1] He is so immersed in his own comfort and selfishness that he is unable to realize that in this poor man lies the door to his own liberation. And what happens to Dives can happen to each one of us. If he had allowed Lazarus to enter into his life, at least sharing his time with him, he would have been in a better position to encounter God, for often God’s riches are offered to us in the poverty of men.

Jesus encourages us to recognize the needs of those around us, to be more sensitive to them. When we live close to Christ, we are less concerned about our own problems, and, on the contrary, have a healthy concern for those most in need. As Saint Josemaría wrote: “A friend of ours used to say: ‘The poor are my best

spiritual book and the main motive of my prayers. It pains me to see them, and in each one of them, Christ. And because it hurts, I realise I love Him and love them.””^[2] —

THE SIGNIFICANCE of Jesus' parable about the rich man and the poor man is revealed in the second part. Our Lord tells us that, after some time, both protagonists die. But while the poor man Lazarus, accustomed to a life of hunger and discomfort, is carried by the angels to the bosom of Abraham, the rich man descends into hell and suffers indescribable torments. Curiously, only when an unbridgeable chasm separates them does the rich man finally look closely at Lazarus. “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish

in this flame” (*Lk 16:24*). Accustomed to a life filled with pleasure, even after death he continues to see others as mere instruments to satisfy his own needs.

The rich man’s cold attitude towards others ultimately determines his eternal destiny. Because of his inability to feel mercy for his neighbor’s needs, it was impossible for him to open himself to divine mercy, the only path that leads us directly to heaven. “The parable clearly warns: God’s mercy towards us is linked to our mercy towards our neighbour; when this is lacking, also that of not finding room in our closed heart, He cannot enter. If I do not open wide the door of my heart to the poor, that door remains closed. Even to God.”^[3] Every time we experience God’s mercy, we receive a clear invitation to care for those who need our compassion. In his parable, Jesus tells us: only by transforming

our lives into more compassionate places will we help build the “divine paths on earth.”^[4] —

“CHRISTIAN concern for others,” the Prelate of Opus Dei reminds us, “stems precisely from our union with Christ and our identification with the mission to which He has called us.”^[5] —

In our prayer, we conform our affections to the sentiments of Jesus. By contemplating Jesus hidden in the simplicity of the Eucharist and sensing his company in the depths of our soul, we will begin to understand the great truth of Saint Paul’s words: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor” (2 *Cor* 8:9). We too will feel the need to share our small riches with those who need them most.

“We are for the crowd: we are never closed in, we live facing the crowd and have deeply engraved on our hearts those words of Christ Jesus our Lord: I have compassion for this crowd, because they have been with me for three days and have nothing to eat.”^[6] — Christians are not indifferent to all the suffering present in the world; on the contrary, knowing they are God’s children, they know they have the world as an inheritance, including its problems. Therefore we should ask Jesus to give us a heart to the measure of His, “so that all the needs, the sorrows, the sufferings of the men and women of our time, especially the weakest, may enter into it.”^[7] —

Mary always saw herself as poor in God’s eyes; and therefore she could always perceive the greatness of his mercy. Seeing this divine richness also enabled her to notice the poverty of those around her, that is,

their needs. We can ask our Lady to make us more sensitive to the needs of those near us, knowing that there we also find the path to heaven.

[1] Francis, Audience, 18 May 2016.

[2] St. Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 827.

[3] Francis, Audience, 18 May 2016.

[4] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 314.

[5] Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, 1 November 2019, no. 10.

[6] St. Josemaría, *Letter 24*, no. 23.

[7] Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, Pastoral Letter, 14 February 2017, no. 31.

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