

Thursday's Gospel: Our Life, A Time to Serve

Gospel for Thursday in the 2nd
Week of Lent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk* 16:19-31)

“There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried;

and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.'

But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'

And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham

said, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

Commentary

Everything in this parable is an invitation to conversion. No element is missing: a blessed person and a needy one; a wealthy person who seems to think only of himself, and one who begs at his door. Death and judgment: the time we have here is time to be concerned about one another. What we hold deep in our heart is what we will knock on the doors of the Heavenly Kingdom with.

Therefore we need to show now, with our lives, while we have time, what we aspire to: what truly matters to us. What and who do we live for? For we don't know how much time is left to us.

This passage is very powerful. But it is even more so if we remember what it refers to in the Old Testament. Abraham is the father in faith of the people of Israel. He and those who believe like him have been promised great blessings. He generously responds to the divine call and, having many goods, is a model of hospitality: *Do not forget hospitality, thanks to which some, without knowing it, entertained angels (Heb 13:2)*. In Abraham we see a faith that has penetrated and reached the depths of the heart: a living faith that bears fruit. A faith expressed in charity.

The rich man in the parable, a person without a name, thinks he is a son of Abraham and therefore heir to his blessings. But death, which is a judgment on one's life, reveals what God looks at when he judges us: the sincerity of our heart. The parable tells us that a faith without works is a dead faith. The rich man was not a good Jew: he had not given heed to the words of Moses. However, it is not works alone that save a person. Lazarus, who does have a name, has no works that we are told of. The Fathers of the Church say that he is rewarded for his patient acceptance not only of physical suffering but of the contempt others have shown him. For us, the message is clear. We need to open our heart to our neighbors and put at their service the gifts, both material and spiritual, that we ourselves have been granted.

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