

Sunday, September 29, 2019

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Amos 6:1, 4-7

2nd Reading: 1 Timothy 6:11-16

Responsorial: Psalm 146:7-10

Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

Reaching Out to Those in Need, One by One, As Jesus Did

Lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus. (Luke 16:20)

How many times do you think this rich man walked past Lazarus every day? Yet it's as if the man never really saw him; he was little more than part of the "landscape." The rich man just accepted Lazarus' presence as a fact of life.

The rich man in Jesus' parable dies and ends up in torment in the netherworld. But it's not simply because he was rich. It was because he didn't care for this other human being who was, in a way, part of his daily life.

We all know that being a Christian means caring for the less fortunate. There are so many needy people that we can feel overwhelmed. And besides, most of us aren't policy experts with the know-how needed to lift people out of poverty. Even if we gave away all of our possessions, it would hardly make a dent.

It's helpful, then, to remember that Jesus didn't have some grand strategy for solving the problem of poverty either. He just reached out to people, one by one. If the rich man in Jesus' parable had done the same thing by caring for the beggar at his door, his life might have ended much differently.

That's where we can start too—by helping one person at a time, especially those whom we encounter as part of our daily lives. If every person did that, think about how many people would be reached!

Remember too that God wants you to help those people who may not be lacking in material goods but are still "poor." As St. Teresa of Calcutta said, "There are many people in the world dying for a piece of bread, but there are many more dying for a little love." Your care and presence for these people are just as important.

At Mass today, ask the Lord to open your eyes to someone who may be at your "door," without you even realizing it. You can make a real difference!

"Jesus, show me the 'Lazarus' in my life who needs my help."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

Sunday, September 29, 2019

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading begins with these words: *Thus says the LORD the God of hosts: Woe to the complacent in Zion! Lying upon beds of ivory, stretched comfortably on their couches, they eat lambs taken from the flock, and calves from the stall! Improvising to the music of the harp, like David, they devise their own accompaniment. They drink wine from bowls and anoint themselves with the best oils; yet they are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph!* It goes on to describe the fate of the complacent: *Therefore, now they shall be the first to go into exile, and their wanton revelry shall be done away with.*
 - Why do you think God's punishment was so strong against *the complacent in Zion*?
 - As we read the words of the first reading, it is easy to say to ourselves, "I'm glad I'm not like these people." In what ways can we fall into these same kinds of *complacent* actions in our own lives?
 - What can we do to overcome this complacency?
2. The responsorial psalm opens with these words: *Blessed he who keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets captives free. The LORD gives sight to the blind; the LORD raises up those who were bowed down. The LORD loves the just; the LORD protects strangers.* It continues with these words: *The fatherless and the widow he sustains, but the way of the wicked he thwarts.*
 - How would you describe the difference in the fate of the *complacent* from the first reading and God's compassion and mercy on the person who *keeps faith forever, secures justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry*?
 - How would you rate yourself against the person described in this reading? Where do you fall short?
3. The second reading from the first letter to Timothy begins with these words: *But you, man of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses.*
 - In the beginning words, St. Paul lists various actions, to be pursued by Timothy, as a man of God. What does this list represent to you?
 - How important is God's call to you to live your life as a man or women of God? Why?
 - How does the way you live out your own life each day stack up against the list given by St. Paul?
4. Like the first reading and responsorial psalm, the Gospel reading faces us with a contrast between two types of persons: *There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table.* In the reading, we are also faced with the difference between the fate of the selfish and self-centered rich man and the lowly poor man: *When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, "Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames."*
 - What do you think is the main message of this parable?
 - We do you think there was such a difference between what happened to the rich man and the lowly poor man?
 - How does this parable apply to you?
5. In the meditation, we hear these challenging words: "It's helpful, then, to remember that Jesus didn't have some grand strategy for solving the problem of poverty either. He just reached out to people, one by one. If the rich man in Jesus' parable had done the same thing by caring for the beggar at his door, his life might have ended much differently. That's where we can start too—by helping one person at a time, especially those whom we encounter as part of our daily lives. If every person did that, think about how many people would be reached! Remember too that God wants you to help those people who may not be lacking in material goods but are still 'poor.'"
 - What do these words from the meditation mean to you? "Remember too that God wants you to help those people who may not be lacking in material goods but are still 'poor.'"
 - In what ways do you reach out to "people, one by one" and help "one person at a time, especially those whom we encounter as part of our daily lives"?
 - Are there some steps you can take to do better individually, within your parish, and with other groups?

Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to be his hands and feet to others, and to be as generous as he was. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Jesus, show me the 'Lazarus' in my life who needs my help."

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry.]