

## Homily of Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

About 750 B.C., Amos denounced the rich and the leaders in Israel who in their extravagant life of luxury oppressed and neglected the suffering poor: “Those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge upon their couches; eating lambs taken from the flock, and calves from the stall; who improvise to the music of the harp, composing on musical instruments like David, who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the best oils, but are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph.”

The neglect of the poor by the rich and the leaders was not different during the time of Jesus, which was why Jesus gave the parable of the rich man and Lazarus: “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. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores.”

The rich man did nothing wrong for being rich. His three sins were, lack of moderation (“dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day”), negligence, and lack of compassion (“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”). While the rich man did not express compassion to Lazarus, the rich man’s dogs did. The dogs, ordinarily, would have barked aggressively at Lazarus to ward him off from the rich man’s gate. Instead, the dogs expressed compassion to Lazarus by licking his sores.

Oppressive leaders and neglect of the poor despite the world’s development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, may be worse than they were during the time of Amos and the time of Jesus. It’s a fact that some rich countries do not care about the plight of some poor countries. Food is wasted in some rich countries, while people starve and die of hunger in some poor countries. It’s a fact that some rich people do not care about the suffering of poor people. It’s a fact that some corrupt leaders wine and dine excessively and do not care about the sufferings of the majority of the people who are poor. The money that should have been used for the benefit of the poor is stolen and spent on a life of vanity.

In the first reading, the consequence of the sins of the heartless rich and corrupt leaders in Israel was that they were conquered by Babylon and carried into exile in 597 B.C. In the Gospel, the rich man’s sin landed him in a place of torment when he died. These readings bring to mind Isaiah 3:10-11, “Happy the just, for it will go well with them, the fruit of their works they will eat. Woe to the wicked! It will go ill with them, with the work of their hands they will be repaid.”

However, the message from the readings is not that we look forward and delight over the bad things that befall sinners, but we are to pray for the conversion of sinners. St. Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:1-4, “First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity. This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.” St. Paul exhorts us in the second reading to “pursue righteousness.” He says, “But you, man of God, avoid all this. Instead, 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.”

We may not be among the negligent and heartless rich people, or among the corrupt political and economic leaders who waste and squander the wealth that would have benefited the poor. But, we are all called to be compassionate and caring; to open our eyes and see the ‘Lazarus’ lying at our door; and to open our hearts to welcome them. By doing so, we fulfil the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:35-36, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.” Matthew 5:6-7 “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”

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