

GOSPEL

LUKE 16:19-31

Jesus said to the Pharisees: 'There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen and feast magnificently every day. And at his gate there lay a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to fill himself with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even came and licked his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried.

'In his torment in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off with Lazarus in his bosom. So he cried out, "Father Abraham, pity me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames." "My son," Abraham replied "remember that during your life good things came your way, just as bad things came the way of Lazarus. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony. But that is not all: between us and you a great gulf has been fixed, to stop anyone, if he wanted to, crossing from our side to yours, and to stop any crossing from your side to ours."

'The rich man replied, "Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, since I have five brothers, to give them warning so that they do not come to this place of torment too." "They have Moses and the prophets," said Abraham, "let them listen to them." "Ah, no, father Abraham," said the rich man "but if someone comes to them from the dead, they will repent." Then Abraham said to him, "If they will not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead."

The Gospel of the Lord.

A REFLECTION BY POPE BENEDICT

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus tells the Parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus. The former lives in luxury and egoism and when he dies, he will go to hell. The poor man on the contrary eats the food left over from the table of the rich man, and at his death he will be brought by angels to his eternal dwelling place with God and the saints. "Blessed are you poor", the Lord proclaimed to his disciples, "for yours is the Kingdom of God". But the message of the parable goes further. It reminds us that while we are in this world we should listen to the Lord who speaks through the Sacred Scriptures and to live according to his will, otherwise after death it will be too late to repent. This parable teaches us two lessons: the first is that God loves the poor and comforts their humiliation; the second is that our eternal destiny is conditioned by our attitude, it is up to us to follow the path that God has laid out for us in order to attain life and this path is love, not intended as a feeling but as service to others in the charity of Christ.

St Vincent de Paul gave great example of this care for the poor. In 16th-century France, he himself keenly perceived the strong contrast between the richest and the poorest of people. In fact, as a priest, he had the opportunity to experience the aristocratic life and life in the country, as well as the dregs of society in Paris. Encouraged by the love of Christ, Vincent de Paul knew how to organize permanent forms of service for marginalized people, giving life to the so-called "Charit ees" and "Charities", that is the groups of women who gave their time and belongings to the most marginalized people. Some of these volunteers chose to consecrate themselves completely to God and to the poor, with St Louise de Marillac, and St Vincent, Founder of the "Daughters of Charity" the first female congregation to live a consecrated life "in the world", with the common people, including the sick and the needy.

Dear friends, only Love with a capital

"L" can bring true happiness! This is shown by another witness, a young girl who was proclaimed Blessed namely Chiara Badano, an Italian girl born in 1971, who was afflicted by a disease that caused her death just before she turned 19. Despite her suffering, she was a ray of light [luce] as her nickname suggests "Chiara Luce". Fully accepting the will of God, she spoke her last words: "Bye Mum. Be happy because I am". Let us praise God because his love is stronger than evil and death. Let us thank the Virgin Mary, who leads youth, through difficulty and suffering, to love Jesus and to discover the beauty of life.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Pope Francis reminds us that God loves the poor and comforts their humiliation. How do you, as a disciple, practically engage with "the poor" and bring comfort and justice?
2. We are again reminded this week of the power and eternal importance of repentance in our actions and our attitudes. What attitudes do you need to repent from that hinder you being an authentic disciple of Jesus?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.