

Fr. Canisius' Reflection for the Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear Parishioners,

In today's Gospel, Jesus uses a parable to teach us about the many opportunities that come before us to show love to others. As with all parables, it operates on two levels: the story and the teaching.

In the story, we see how the rich man living a life of comfort and ease is oblivious to the struggles of Lazarus at his doorway. How often did he step over him or look away? He would have known the teachings of the prophets; how could he have knowledge of the words of Amos that we heard today and not been moved to help? Amos condemns the people of Zion in today's first reading, for they relax in complacency and self-absorption. How could he have given worship to God and yet been blind to Lazarus' pain? It could only be that he had chosen not to see Lazarus.

The rich man in the Gospel chose not to see Lazarus. But he knew he was there. He even knew his name. But during his life, he chose to remain blind to his needs, not even dumping the scraps from his table outside his gate for him to eat. Perhaps this would be an acknowledgment that he could do something to ease his suffering. To inoculate himself from guilt he chose to ignore him, to pretend there was nothing he could do. Even now, do we assume there is nothing we can do to help the masses of Lazaruses at our gates?

We will be judged by love. The Pharisees who heard this message were noted for their adherence to the law, but they were often devoid of love and compassion and closed to the needs of others. The Christian message is one of joy and hope, which by definition means not being closed to the needs of others: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1).

If we seek to live in the love of God, then we must be willing to share that love with others. If we wish to experience the love of God, let us begin by becoming a people of love and showing that love through our word, our choices, and our actions. Love is the heart of the Gospel.

As we listen to God's word, let us look at our own life from the point of view of someone like Lazarus. How would someone like him see us?

Have a blessed week!

Fr. Canisius