

## 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

### GOSPEL

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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."

(Luke 16:19-31)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The Law of Moses, the Torah, and the writings of the prophets both stress the need for justice and compassion.
- In the Hebrew Scriptures, God gives a preferential love to the poor, the outcast and the stranger.
- It is the poor man in this story whose name is given (Lazarus means 'God helps') while the rich man remains anonymous. Perhaps he represents us all.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

This is another text about the unexpected reversals of the kingdom of God. The situation of the two characters is described in detail. The rich man no doubt saw his affluence as a blessing from God, a reward for his goodness. His only sin was his failure to see the poverty and desperate need that was at his doorstep. So many stories in Luke's Gospel deal with our responsibility to use wealth for the good of all rather than to monopolise resources selfishly for our own benefit alone. When the reality of the situation dawns on the rich man, he is concerned that his brothers do not make the same mistake. But Jesus points out that they already have the teaching of Moses and the prophets who repeatedly call Israel to justice and mercy. If people are prepared to ignore that call, what difference will it make 'even if someone should rise from the dead'. This phrase offers a challenge to Christians: do we too, like the rich man, fail to see and respond to the needs in our world? Christian faith is about more than Sunday worship. It is about living the message of Jesus every day.

- In what ways can our own comfort and wellbeing make us blind to the needs of others?
- What are the most urgent needs in your local community?
- What do you think are the most urgent needs of our global village?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- When have you closed your eyes to the plight of another?
- Have you ever failed to listen to good advice? What were the consequences?
- Share stories of a time when you were in desperate need and someone offered assistance to you. Alternatively, it may have been that your needs were not recognised because others were too absorbed in their own activities.
- Share what you have with someone who has less this week.
- Today's alternative communion antiphon makes a suitable prayer this week:

*By this we came to know the love of God:  
that Christ laid down his life for us;  
so we ought to lay down our lives for one another.*

### SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

Just as the rich man failed to understand Moses and the prophets, today there are many who question the teaching authority of the Church. This is often based on

misunderstanding. The magisterium or teaching authority of the Church is anchored in the 'the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether it is in its written form [the sacred Scriptures] or in the form of Tradition [how that truth from God has been interpreted and applied over the centuries]' (CCC, §85). Always at the heart of the Church's teaching is the need to guide believers in their moral response to the world and its issues.

- There may be some church teachings that catechumens find difficult to accept, (for example, issues of contraception or abortion; divorce and remarriage). This could be an opportunity to explore the difficult teachings of the Church and to explain their origin in the belief that life comes from God and that each human being has intrinsic dignity.
- There may also be concerns about the perceived hypocrisy of some church positions (for example, the 'wealth' of the Church in the face of human poverty). Explore any other difficulties catechumens are struggling with.

Today is Social Justice Sunday. The last Sunday of September is designated by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference as a day to focus on an issue of justice currently facing our nation. You could examine the bishops' Social Justice Statement for 2019 or look at the themes presented in previous statements. Material and discussion points are available of the [ACBC website](#). How can your community respond to the bishops' call?

### SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

Abraham is an important figure in Judaism. He was the first person mentioned in Scripture who put his complete trust and faith in God (Genesis 12). Abraham became the model of righteousness. To rest in the bosom of Abraham is a metaphor for eternal happiness.

### LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- How might outsiders see your own community? Are there signs of ostentatious wealth that seem incompatible with the Gospel? What can be done about such situations? In what ways does your community reach out to the needy? Can catechumens become involved in this outreach?
- You could use visual images of the suffering in our world as a focus for prayer. Pray for those who need help and for those who fail to help. Pray for each other. A suitable

song could be 'Christ be our light' (GA 404). Conclude with the prayer of blessing in RCIA at §97C.

### NOTES