Thursday of the Second Week of Lent

Gospel text (*Lk* 16:19-31): Jesus said to the Pharisees: “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.

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.’ Abraham replied, ‘My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.’

He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.’ He said, ‘Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ Then Abraham said, ‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.’”

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Fr. Xavier SOBREVÍA i Vidal
(Sant Just Desvern, Barcelona, Spain)

Today the Gospel is a parable that reveals the realities of man after death. Jesus speaks to us of the reward or punishment that we will receive according to how we have behaved.

The contrast between the rich and the poor is very strong. The luxury and the indifference of the rich man; the pathetic situation of Lazarus, with the dogs licking his ulcers (cf. Lk 16:19-21). Everything has a great realism that makes us enter the scene.

We can think, where would I be if I were one of the two protagonists of the parable? Our society constantly reminds us that we must live well, with comfort and well-being, enjoying and carefree. Living for oneself, without worrying about others, or worrying just enough to keep our conscience clear, but not out of a sense of justice, love or solidarity.

Today we are presented with the need to listen to God in this life; to convert ourselves in it and to take advantage of the time He grants us. God asks for an account. In this life we stake our lives.

Jesus makes clear the existence of hell and describes some of its characteristics: the pain suffered by the senses — let him “dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames” (Lk 16:24)— and its eternity — “between us and you a great chasm is established” (Lk 16:26).

St. Gregory the Great tells us that “all these things are said so that no one can excuse himself because of his ignorance.” We must put off the old self and be free to love our neighbor. We must respond to the suffering of the poor, the sick, or the abandoned. It would be good to remember this parable frequently so that it makes us more responsible for our lives. The moment of death comes to all of us. And we must always be prepared, because one day we will be judged.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Jesus warned against the danger of earthly possessions. Nevertheless, Jesus did not condemn the possession of earthly goods absolutely. Instead, he was anxious to recall the twofold commandment of love of God and love of neighbor.” (Saint John Paul II)

- “Yet the danger always remains that by a constant refusal to open the doors of their hearts to Christ, the proud, rich and powerful will end up condemning themselves and plunging into the eternal abyss of solitude which is Hell.” (Francis)

- “How can we not recognize Lazarus, the hungry beggar in the parable, in the multitude of human beings without bread, a roof or a place to stay? How can we fail to hear Jesus: ‘As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me’ (Mt 25:45)?.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2463)