Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

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.'"

"Now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented"

Fr. Valentí ALONSO i Roig
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Today, Jesus confronts us with the social injustice that arises from the inequalities between rich and poor. As if it were one of the distressing images we're accustomed to seeing on television, the story of

Lazarus moves us, achieving a sensationalist effect to stir emotions: "Dogs even used to come and lick his sores" (Luke 16:21). The difference is clear: the rich man was clothed in purple; the poor man was clothed in sores.

Equality comes quickly in this situation: both died. At the same time, however, the difference becomes more pronounced: one arrived at Abraham's side; the other was merely buried. If we had never heard this story, and if we applied the values of our society, we might conclude that the one who won the prize must have been the rich man, and the one abandoned in the grave, the poor man. It's clear, logically.

The judgment comes to us from the mouth of Abraham, the father of faith, and clarifies the outcome: "'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad" (Luke 16:25). God's justice turns the situation around. God does not allow the poor to remain forever in suffering, hunger, and misery.

This story has touched the hearts of millions of wealthy people throughout history and led multitudes to conversion, but what message is needed in our developed, hyper-connected, globalized world to make us aware of the social injustices of which we are the authors, or at least accomplices? All who heard Jesus' message longed to rest in Abraham's bosom, but how many people in our world will be satisfied with simply being buried when they die, without wanting to receive the comfort of the Father in heaven? True wealth is getting to see God, and what is needed is what Saint Augustine said: "Walk through man and you will reach God." May the Lazaruses of each day help us to find God.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Learn therefore to be poor and needy, whether you have anything in this world, or whether you have nothing. For you also find the beggar who is arrogant and the wealthy who humiliates himself. God looks on the inside.” (St. Augustinus)

- Amid a culture of indifference which not infrequently turns ruthless, our style of life should instead be devout, filled with empathy, compassion and mercy, drawn daily from the wellspring of prayer.” (Francis)

- “... The drama of hunger in the world calls Christians who pray sincerely to exercise responsibility toward their brethren, both in their personal behavior and in their solidarity with the human family...” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nº 2831)