

HOMILY for 26th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C

This Sunday's First Reading & Gospel talk about how the wealthy & the powerful treat the poor & the lowly. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

Fire swept the plains & burned down the farmer's barn. While he surveyed the wreckage, his wife called their insurance company & asked them to send a check for \$50,000, the amount of insurance on the barn.

"Madam, we don't give you the money," the company official explained. "We replace the barn & all the equipment in it."

"In that case," replied the wife, "cancel the policy I have on my husband!"

Anyway, at the annual Priests' Conference this week, our speakers talk about St. Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body written in 135 speeches explaining how we humans were created out of God's love, redeemed by the Blood & Cross of God's Son Jesus, & intended to be in communion with God forever in Heaven. Unfortunately, sins & temptations of this world have tried to pull us away from that plan of God & prevented us from experiencing true peace & happiness. This Sunday's Reading will help shed light on that & warn us on how to avoid that big mistake & God's judgment on the Last Day.

Let's take a look at this Sunday's First Reading. Here is what it says, "...Woe to the complacent in Zion! Lying upon beds of ivory, stretched comfortably on their couches, they eat lambs taken from the flock, & calves from the stall! Improvising to the music of the harp... They drink wine from bowls & anoint themselves with the best oils... Therefore, now they shall be the first to go into exile, & their wanton revelry shall be done away with." As you can see, the wealthy & the powerful have been tempted/lured to devote their whole lives to enrich & enjoy themselves & care about no one else. They seem to focus only on their comfortable lifestyle & happiness & pay no attention to anyone/anything else such as their neighbors, the poor, the misfortunate, the environment/God's Creation, or God's Commandments. They isolate themselves from the rest of the world & keep God's blessings all to themselves. Worst yet, they do not seem to care if their neighbors, the poor, the misfortunate would live or die. In case you have any doubt about the attitude of the wealthy & powerful toward their neighbors, the poor, & the misfortunate, this Sunday's Gospel shares with us one of Jesus' parables regarding this relationship as following, "...There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments & fine linen & 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 & lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died & was buried."

I don't know about you, but it looks like there is a huge chasm/big separation between the wealthy & the poor, between the powerful & the lowly on earth as well as in Heaven. The rich man in today's Gospel seems to enjoy his comfortable lifestyle & care only about his own livelihood. A poor, hungry man with sores on his body wishes to have some crumbs from the rich man's table to survive each day. Sadly, the rich man would not care for or show any compassion to the poor man & give him any food. I wonder how you feel about the mistreatment of the poor & the lowly in today's First Reading & Gospel. Some people might think that it is alright/justifiable to mistreat the poor, the lowly, & the immigrants for one reason or another. But, Jesus & our Christian/Catholic Commandments of love & teachings

unequivocally demand us to treat our neighbors with kindness & compassion. Unfortunately, some Christians/Catholics have failed to live up to Jesus' Commandments & expectations & treated the poor, the lowly, & the immigrants worse than dirt. In fact, we learn in today's Gospel that the dog knew how to treat the poor, the lowly, & the immigrants better than the rich, the powerful, & some Christians/Catholics would by coming to lick the sores on poor Lazarus' body. The dog was the only friend/relationship that poor Lazarus had besides his relationship with God. The wealthy, the powerful, & some Christians/Catholics have sunk so low that a dog would have more compassion for the poor, the lowly, & the immigrants than they do.

Now, let's see how God would judge the wealthy, the powerful, & some Christians/Catholics on the Last Day. Today's Gospel says, "...From the netherworld, where he [the rich man] was in torment, he raised his eyes & saw Abraham far off & Lazarus by his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water & 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 & 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.'" My friends, the rich man dared to beg God to have mercy on him as he was condemned to the hot & unquenchable fire of Hell. Unfortunately that is how the wealthy, the powerful, & some Christians/Catholics would want God to treat them in the next life after the horrible way they dealt with the poor, the lowly, & the immigrants on earth. God would surely hold them accountable for all their actions on earth & refuse to bend to their demands on Judgement Day. So, keep that in mind & begin to change the way you treat the poor, the lowly, & the immigrants on earth. Otherwise, God would treat us exactly the same way on the Last Day.

Meanwhile, in today's Second Reading, St. Paul advises us Christians/Catholics to follow this way of life, "But you, people of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, & gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called... I charge you before God... to keep God's Commandments without stain or reproach until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ." So, St. Paul asks us to live up to a higher standard & a life of virtues instead of the sinful way of the world. He calls us to put our Lord Jesus & Christian/Catholic faith above our political leaders & the politics of our time if we want to avoid Jesus' harsh judgment on His Second Coming. He begs us to follow God's Commandment of love & make personal sacrifices for our Christian/Catholic faith. That way we can show the world how awesome our Christian/Catholic way of life is & get it to join us in building a peaceful & caring world. Otherwise, we will continue to see an attitude of selfishness & greed, a lack of compassion & care, & a heart full of hate & violence in our world.

My dear brothers & sisters, St. Mother Teresa & late Pope Francis felt that our world needs a little more compassion to keep it from being a cold & lonely place. For the wealthy & the powerful often focus only on their comfortable lifestyle as everyone seems to treat one's neighbors worse than a dog would. We Christians/Catholics got to be better than the rest of the world & learn to treat our neighbors as Jesus would expect us to do. That way we could turn our current world of mercilessness & indifference to one of compassion & care. Moreover, if we follow that way of life, Jesus would treat us with mercy on the Last Day.