

## Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2019

My beloved brothers and sisters, even though we may have heard this Gospel many time, even though we may have read this Gospel many times; nonetheless, the Word of God is always new, always speaks to us anew! Such was the case, when I read and prayed the Gospel in preparation for this Sunday. I saw something in the Gospel I had never seen before: The Rich man, whom we call Dives, was a complete success. He was wealthy and powerful in the eyes of the world; however, he was blind and arrogant to the poor man at his gate, who he had to almost step-over to enter his house.

Jesus tells us that he wore purple; which was allowed only to men who were of royal rank and only permitted to those allowed by the Emperor. It was a symbol of ultimate power, rank and privilege. The dye purple was made in only one place in the whole of the ancient world! Jesus also said the man wore fine linen. Fine linen was imported from Egypt, it could not be made in Israel, it had to be imported, and it too, was extremely expensive.

On the other hand, Lazarus, whose name in Hebrew was Elieazar, which means: "God alone is my help!", was a total failure in the eyes of the world. The Gospel tells us that he was crushed by poverty and incapacitated by sickness and disease. However, something I had never paid attention to, was the notice that the dogs would come and lick his wounds. In other words, he was so helpless and powerless in his state that he could not even move to prevent the dogs from licking his suppurating wounds. In the ancient world, his plight was looked upon as the punishment of God for some moral failing; therefore, in the eyes of the world, he was not only an economic failure, but a moral and spiritual failure as well. Jesus does not go into the reason for Lazarus' condition; He only presents the plight of Lazarus: God alone is his help!

This is the first teaching of the Gospel: we often compare ourselves against the plight of others, and fail to realize, that regardless of our economic status in the world, we are nothing more than Lazarus: poor, broken, and powerless. Our worldly success can make us blind to our own poverty before God, but also the plight of the poor around us! Notice, Jesus does not condemn the success of the

rich man; rather, He condemns the blindness of the rich man to the plight of the poor man at his doorstep. His success had made him self-centered, complacent and arrogant. Worldly success had blinded him to the needs of others, and deafened him to the voice of God.

This is a profound warning from God the Son to us in our times! There are many Dives in our world and our society today. So how do we make sure that we do not become blind and deaf to the cry of poor around us and deaf to the voice of God? First, live a life of gratitude and thanksgiving to the Good God who has given us all things! Secondly, stand before God in our own personal powerlessness and wretchedness, and let Him embrace us with His infinite Mercy and love! Thirdly, make the decision to be generous: God is never outdone in His generosity to those who are generous! That's part of the reality of the Eucharist we are now celebrating, isn't it!