

## 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday (C)

- In one of my previous parishes I found that a homeless disheveled man had apparently settled himself in a space between the hall and the shed.
- I let that go, thinking that he'll move on soon, but he was still there several days later.
- On one day, I saw him urinating against the wall of the hall, now that annoyed me, & so I berated him for it, but then asked if I could give him anything to eat – he welcomed the offer & I opened the public toilets for him to use.
- When I went back to him, I asked his name & he told me his story.
- He'd been a PhD student, had come from a good family background, but he had a breakdown & was diagnosed with schizophrenia & his life had fallen apart.
- Beforehand, he was a nameless, homeless man, now he was for me a person, by the name of Paul, who had dignity.
- Our attitudes can change when we move beyond having certain judgements about nameless people, we can categorise, who are different from me, to when we come face-to-face with them & are able to address them by name.
- Some years ago, I spoke with a woman who grew up in a well-to-do family in India; she remembered as a child being driven to school by the family chauffeur, & as they drove out of their walled compound, she could see the families who had established shanties against the walls of their compound, but it was only after having lived in Australia for some time that she realized that these families were the poor; while she lived there, that was just the way society was organized, & everyone accepted it.
- There is a tendency to think that the Christian life is about avoiding sin & evil, but that's only secondary; the Christian life is about positively doing good.
- The rich man in the gospel wasn't evil & he did nothing wrong, but his sin was that he was so comfortable that he was unable to see or hear the pain of the poor man, Lazarus, whom he saw every day.
- In the eyes of his neighbours, he was probably a very upright & just man, fulfilling all the purity requirements of his faith, but his focus of attention was on himself & not others; he lacked the compassion & a heart that Jesus reminded people was expected by God.
- One of our professors at the seminary, a Chinese Jesuit asked to spend some time teaching in an Asian underdeveloped country; his religious superiors approved but asked him to first teach in a school for wealthy people in that Asian country.
- The school children lived in luxury & opulence, but also lived alongside the poor, sometimes in the street around the walls of their mansions.

- The priest was frustrated at how little they knew about the life of the poor in their very own streets - it was just accepted that they were there; one day he asked them to write an essay about a poor family.
- One boy wrote: *"In a poor family, everyone is poor - the father is poor, the mother is poor, the children are poor, the cook is poor, the gardener is poor, the maids are poor & even the chauffer is poor..."*
- The boy had no idea how his neighbours lived - he saw them daily but was blind not only to their poverty, but that they even existed as worthy of consideration as people who are poor.
- Luke uses this parable to point out the great danger of riches.
- The wealthy easily become arrogant & self-sufficient.
- It can be added that the wealthy are wealthy because they keep the poor poor by exploiting them.
- Their own selves & their wealth satisfies them & so they notice no one else who is not of use to them - they also don't notice God.
- They think that riches, power & possessions are the only things that count for anything, but we needn't think that this is the attitude of only the very wealthy - to varying degrees all of us are seduced to thinking like this & some succumb to it more than others, & the gospel also reveals who is ultimately poor - those who live at a superficial level like the rich man.
- To be Christian is to live with our eyes & ears open to God's call of us to respond to the needs of people.
- In the celebration of baptism is a beautiful ritual action after the person is baptised with water & anointed with oil - the priest touches the person's ears & mouth & prays: *"The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear & the dumb speak. May he soon touch your ears to receive his word & your mouth to proclaim his faith to the praise & the glory of God the Father."*
- As Christians we are sensitised to the Word of God & to the needs of our neighbours.
- In this Eucharist we pray for a sensitivity to both - to recognise where God calls us to respond to those in need, whom I may see every day.
- On this World Day of Migrants & Refugees we are called to be aware of their plight, of how they have either been forced or compelled to leave their homeland to find peace & be afforded the opportunity to live a dignified life.
- We need Jesus Christ to touch our hearts with his love & compassion & so, change us; we need to be touched, as Jesus was, by the hardship of the poor, & be moved to changing their lives.
- For Christians, the Word of God constantly reminds us of our obligation to the poor, those who have no voice & those marginalized in any way.
- Each time we gather at Eucharist we give thanks for the saving presence of Christ who gave his life for **all** & that includes every person.