



29. September 2019

“The poor people invite us to do good to them”

Lk 16,19-31

There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen and feast magnificently every day. And at his gate there used to lie a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to fill himself with what fell from the rich man's table. Even dogs came and licked his sores. Now it happened that the poor man died and was carried away by the angels into Abraham's embrace. The rich man also died and was buried. 'In his torment in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off with Lazarus in his embrace. So he cried out, "Father Abraham, pity me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames." Abraham said, "My son, remember that during your life you had your fill of good things, just as Lazarus his fill of bad. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony. But that is not all: between us and you a great gulf has been fixed, to prevent those who want to cross from our side to yours or from your side to ours." So he said, " Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, since I have five brothers, to give them warning so that they do not come to this place of torment too." Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them listen to them." The rich man replied, "Ah no, father Abraham, but if someone comes to them from the dead, they will repent." Then Abraham said to him, "If they will not listen either to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead."

Two things we can reflect in today's text:

On the one hand, it is the earnestness of the obligation to share one's riches, whatever it may be, with the needy and not to use them hardy only for oneself!

Further, that faith is not awakened on the basis of miracles, but it is a gift.

Through the texts of the Holy Scriptures and the inner instruction of the Holy Spirit, we learn that we should not look to the transitory goods and build up a sort of "secure existence" with them. All earthly goods have only a limited value, remain uncertain and pass away, as all earthly things go by. From the point of view of Christian wisdom, it becomes clear that we can not hang our hearts on something transient, because then we will be unfree and the house of life is built on sandy ground. But it is not just this insight that should give us the necessary distance to the earthly goods.

In today's text we see that the rich failed to do good, that he had no compassion for the poor, and missed the opportunity to make "*friends in Heaven*" (cf. *Lk 16,9*) sharing with the poor Lazarus. He lived only in his reality and probably did not think of sharing his wealth or at least of letting something of his wealth flow to the poor Lazarus at his door.

Was it just this Lazarus who could have reminded him that one should not be rich on your own! After all, it was Lazarus who reminded him of a deeper meaning in life: making the gift of (earthly) wealth a blessing for other people! Was it just this Lazarus at his door - if he had looked at him and his heart would have been touched - Lazarus might have spoken for him before God, when the rich then had to give account for his life before God.

What a wonderful way to do good through those people who need our help. Their existence helps us to be saved from hardheartedness and save ourselves from the seductive and illusory power of wealth through good acts of sharing!

It was too late for the rich man when he died Jesus shows us in his example! This is an emphatic invitation not to miss the time given to do good! When we do it, joy will grow because giving is more blessed than taking!

The rich man in our example thought that he was may be able to help to save his brothers, who lived in the way he had lived, from a similar fate. If the dead Lazarus came as a proof to the brothers to warn them, they would certainly hear, he was convinced.

Jesus rejects such a request. Faith is not bound to miracles, it is a gift and an offer of God to which we are invited to respond. It is a supernatural process that then involves our human nature, so that the mind agrees, the will aligns itself with God, and our heart turns to God more and more. The miracles may

help to strengthen the faith and may be a special sign for the unbelievers, but they are no guarantee that we will come to faith through them!

If we listen to the Holy Scriptures and the authentic Magisterium of the Church, and listen attentively to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to us in our hearts and in many ways, that is enough! Everything else is added as an enrichment; the essential is already given to be able to walk safely on the path of following Christ. This gives us a light on how we can hear the voice of the Lord everywhere, wherever it communicates! Then we listen to Moses and the prophets and understand that they have all prepared the coming of the Lord!

And: in his light we see the light! (*cf. Sal 36,9*).