

September 25, 2016

## 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dr. Samuel Johnson was a great writer and critic. He was the first one to make a major attempt to write the English Dictionary. He was a very kind and generous man, even in his own days of poverty. Every day coming home after work, he used to slip a penny into the hands of every needy person in the street. When he reached home, he would have given away half of what he earned that day. Today's liturgy warns us that an excessive concern for comfort and things of this world will lead to a neglect of God and neighbor.

In the first reading of today, we meet prophet Amos on his return from the desert of Samaria. He finds the leaders of the chosen people completely given over to the pleasures of the world. Amos then declares what is to be their destiny—that they will be the first to be exiled. In the Gospel, we have the story of a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen, and feast magnificently every day. At his door there was a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to fill himself with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. The Lord contrasts the two extreme conditions in this parable: vast wealth in one case and tremendous need in the other. Jesus does not give the details of the rich man's possessions. He puts the entire emphasis on how he used his possessions: wearing expensive clothes and having sumptuous banquets every day. Lazarus was not even given the leftovers. There is nothing wrong in having wealth and riches. They are God's gift to us. But everything matters on how we use those gifts.

Cecil John Rhodes is a business man and politician in S. Africa. At one time he owned 90% of a diamond business. Today he owns 40% of the business. Someone lauded him as the happiest person. His response was, "Happy? No. I spent my life amassing a fortune only to spend half of it on doctors to keep me out of the grave and the other half on lawyers to keep me out of jail."

We are all entrusted with gifts of time, talent and resources. The way we use them will determine where we end up after our life on earth—inn heaven or in hell, in bliss or in torment. There are only three things after we die: judgement, heaven or hell. The rich man in the gospel did not resent Lazarus living at his gate. How many of us would tolerate that today? He did not exploit Lazarus. But the rich man lived for himself as if God did not exist and others did not exist. He had forgotten the fact that we are not owners of what we have but stewards of God's gifts. We should be always mindful that we are the stewards of God's gifts, and we need to use them to give glory to God and for the welfare of the needy. This is what our faith teaches us and we have to be loyal to our faith. We are a stewardship parish. So we are all the more responsible to be good stewards.

A miserly man died and went up to heaven and met St. Peter, who was at the gate. He requested an entry into heaven. St. Peter asked what he had done in life that made him merit an entry into heaven. The miser said that he had given a quarter to a hungry person. St. Peter went in and checked to see if that was recorded in the Book of Life. Surely it was there. St. Peter returned and said that

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that alone was not sufficient to merit an entry into heaven. Then the miser remembered and said that he had given another quarter to a homeless person. St. Peter went to check that again and found it in the Book of Life. St. Peter returned, gave the man 50 cents and told him, "Go to hell."

The rich man lived for himself and spared himself no expense. He was blind to the existence of the needy person on his doorstep. He was not mindful of God or use his gifts to give glory to God. The rich man died, and he went to the place of torment. His punishment was for selfishness. Selfishness and greed are the causes of all confusion and misery in the world today. Let us be good stewards of God's gifts.