

26th Sunday of the Year (C)
(Amos 6:1.4-7 / Luke 16:19-31)
28.09.2025
Generosity

The first Christian community, the men and women who first heard the story of Lazarus and the rich man, must have had a vivid sense of its fulfilment in the person of Jesus Christ: he was the one who was sent by God to remind them that salvation was about more than words and worship, but about caring for the poor and showing generosity for those in need.

The deeply challenging point in the story is that the rich man must have been considered generous by his family and all his friends. Moreover even when in hell, his first thoughts are for his brothers. The man was not completely a bad guy, a greedy miser.

Yet for all this, there is something missing. What is dramatically lacking is attention to all others, generosity towards a stranger in a difficult situation. What we are called to be is generous as our heavenly Father is generous, to go beyond the narrow limits of our relatives and friends, of ethnic ties, religious and political belongings.

Allow me to share some very recent examples that echo the story of Lazarus. Last June, Jeff Bezos' wedding in Venice cost around 50 million dollars. A group of Catholics were talking about the event and one of them said: "He is free to do what he wants with his money." In some way, if you are not a Christian, yes you may think that Jeff Bezos is free to spend his money the way he wants. Yet as Christians we cannot agree with this opinion and think that it is fair, appropriate or simply decent to spend such an amount of money at a time when children, women and men are dying of starvation in many places around the world.

The second and last example comes from an interview I heard on BBC Northern Ireland. A few weeks ago, DUP councillors raised concerns regarding the housing of asylum seekers, some arguing that locals or nationals should have priority over foreigners.

It is clear that this question is difficult and that our politicians have to make tough decisions. Yet again, as Christians, we cannot be satisfied with an approach which would be based on nationals versus foreigners. For us, a poor, a person in need, is a priority whatever passport he or she carries. Pope Leo, then cardinal Prevost, reminded JD Vance, and he still reminds us today that "Jesus does not ask us to rank our love for others." (X, 03.02.2025) Our love is generous to all or it is not Christian love.

When it comes to dramatic situations or decisions which impact many, then love must be wise and requires discernment. However, insofar as we follow Christ, love will always make us walk the extra mile and, sometimes, lead us to the Cross. Generosity will stretch us in order to conform us to Christ, it will spur us on to look beyond the narrow confines of our self-centred ego and teach us that there is more life and joy in giving than in hoarding, more happiness and fulfilment in sharing than in owning.

The rich man thought that he could be saved, enjoying life in his bubble, without paying attention to those who were struggling beyond his comfort zone. There are some today who think that they can make their country great without providing for the material, educational, or medical needs of all its inhabitants, nationals and foreigners.

Obviously, it is not only a question of money. Christian love calls us to be generous with our time, developing a culture of patient listening and real presence to all those we meet. It also calls us to be generous with our prayers. If I mention this last aspect it is because I find it quite puzzling that, in our Christian communities, there are some who, because of their

political stance, cannot pray for the people of Gaza and the people of Israel. Jesus' words are quite clear: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." (Lk 6:38)

The question which is at stake here is whether or not, like the rich man, we consider some people as being beyond the limits of our fellowship, some as not really connected to us.

The question that God asks us is the one he put to Cain: "Where is your brother?" (Gn 4:9) Do you know who is your brother, your sister, do you see and care for him or her?

Recently Pope Leo asked us: "Where are you among the migrants who are despised, imprisoned and rejected, among those who seek salvation and hope but find walls and indifference? Where are you, brother, sister, when the poor are blamed for their poverty, forgotten and discarded, in a world that values profit more than people? (...) We need an extensive "covenant of humanity," founded not on power but on care; not on profit but on gift; not on suspicion but on trust." (*Address*, 12.09.2025)

The rich man of our story was not necessarily a bad man, he was someone who was blind to the reality around him, perhaps prisoner of a society where people on the margins were systematically rejected and discriminated. The rhetoric that we hear sometimes on in the domain of the media can be worse than that. Two weeks ago a TV host on Fox News suggested that homeless people should be killed, according to him they should be given "involuntary lethal injection." (Brian Kilmeade)

The Scriptures remind us that the Lord does not forget the cry of the poor, he is their helper and their stronghold (cf. Ps 9a:10.13; 9b:14) and Jesus taught us that the Kingdom belongs to them (cf. Lk 6:20). A society that forces human beings to the margins, where men, women, and children endure discrimination and humiliation, rests on evil powers and is not compatible with the Kingdom of God.

Allow me to conclude with Pope Francis' words, they are addressed to each one of us: "We are all called to a renewed and profound sense of responsibility, showing solidarity and sharing. It is therefore necessary, that in order to be truly prophetic, the Church make a diligent effort to set out on the paths of the forgotten, coming out of herself, soothing with the balm of fraternity and charity the bleeding sores of those who bear the same wounds of Christ imprinted on their own bodies." (*Letter*, 20.06.2023)