

Thursday 9th March 2023.

2nd Week of Lent – Cycle ‘A’

1st Reading = Jeremiah 17:5-10

Resp. Psalm = Ps 1:1-4;6

Gospel = Luke 16:19-31

Every society has its challenges and must work for a balance of ‘peoples’ according to their cultures and aspirations to meet the needs of their environment. Issues arising have centred on cultural alertness, social inequality, the decadence owing to corruption, some religious practices which overstep their bounds and mislead the poor masses, etc. Many who have fought for this ‘balance’ have tried to depict their societies in caricatural and satiric ways, an attempt to bring some awareness to light. Today’s Gospel portrays a similar caricature; it is the popular story of the poor Lazarus, the victim of social inequity, and the rich man, the victor of that inequity. The caricatures of both men stood in stark contrast to cultural outlooks of the day; people despised the beggar and honored the well off. However, many in Luke’s readership could identify with Lazarus since over 90% of those living in the Roman Empire were poor, while the five percent who had wealth accumulated it through heavy taxation and graft. But it is interesting to see the attitude of the rich man towards Lazarus even in death; he treated the poor man, not as an equal, but as someone beneath him, like a servant to ordered about: “Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.” (Luke 16:24). Even in death, the rich man did not repent of his self-absorbed character.

Despite all he went through in life, Lazarus kept his integrity even while begging at Dives’ door! Destitution could destroy one’s confidence and self-respect, but in principle it can and does coexist with inner peace and strength. A beggar can be nearer to God than the banker, the Bishop/priest, a CEO or the government minister. But the reverse is true; whatever we are in the society; the same banker, priest or Bishop, CEO, the minister, and the rest, they all have dignity and integrity, an equal opportunity to be close to God, to thank God for whatever he has, and should set him on a comfortable spot to serve God. But what do we do with whatever we have in the society? The posts of responsibility, the influence and affluence, the wealth, etc.? dear friends, that we lack to the point of being almost destitute should not lead us to deep our hands in places which will only steal our dignity away. Man retains his dignity not because of what he has, but because he is human and created in the image and likeness of God, even when he

lacks. The true measure of a person's worth is the spiritual goodness of the heart, his closeness to and resemblance of God. It is not dependent of material. We're in a society where we bow to the rich, even when we know (with clear proof) they have robbed the society of its resources for selfish purposes. And because many become gullible, they're bought over by these so-called rich men to feed their selfish ideas and projects (they even boast even as they subject the poor whom they use as tools), and so, they lose their dignity and worth, both in the sight of God and man. At the same time, through the efforts of those who have always presented a caricatural picture of the image of our society, we must join them in changing the status quo of the appalling attitudes we don't want to see. It will be a stiff fight, but we've got God on our side. The core values of society must prevail, whether we be rich or poor; man must retain his dignity. May St Frances of Rome, St Gregory of Nyssa, and St Dominic Savio intercede for us, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

A Fruitful Season of Lent.

Fr Kevin. N. Lereh, m.ss.cc

Together in prayer.