

**Homily for September 26, 2004  
26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)**

**By Father Charles Bowes**

**Amos 6:1a, 4-7**

**Ps 146:7-10**

**1Timothy 6:11-16**

**Luke 16:19-31**

## *Not to see where need lies is to invite regret.*

It was just another ordinary day in the life of the rich man of Luke chapter 16. In fact, to be honest, we – like he – live most of our lives in ordinary time...green time like the vestment. Ordinary time – we get up, eat, work and rest. Then evening comes and it all starts over again... day in and day out. And yet, the stuff of eternity is wrapped up in that ordinariness. The decisions that shape who we are to be forever form themselves out of the day to day.

Jesus paints a vivid picture of the fate that befalls a good-hearted fellow blind to the poverty at his gate. The great risk, the reading tells us, is not so much hard-heartedness as blindness; the character in today's Gospel is faulted not because he does not care, but because he does not see.

And we are like that – we share blindness born of ordinary time, ordinary living. There are needs we don't see, if we are to confront the story head on. But if we try to assume responsibility for others as one

person, we are making the job of seeing and helping infinitely hard on ourselves. In all we do, in all of our living day to day, we are not just individuals; we are a local community, a church, a nation, a larger world. And this hurt, this pain of those in need is as shared as is the ordinary time in which we live, a blindness we share.

There is a brokenness, a blindness that is so much a part of our way of life that it takes skill and effort to see it as abnormal, unacceptable – and until we do, we, like the rich man, can find ourselves with regret, shame at not having mobilized a common effort.

Alone, we'll never solve the problem of hunger and poverty and injustice. The task of the Christian, then, is to enter the hurt or to realize that the system is broken. It is to realize that the poor can never be conformed to the rigorous, self-serving standards of progress, education and consumption – patterns demanded by our culture for even minimal acceptance.

The Christian's job is not to "fix" the poor or to "mainstream" them. That is not it. We are here to enter into the pain of the poor, to expose the wounds that make the suffering of the poor inevitable. The Jesus on the cross is our own best self put there by the blindness of ordinary time.

We need not live with regret or give to the poor as a result of a threat of hell. Perhaps all we can do today is reflect on the problem, decide where we want to focus our efforts. The action will follow, and with it the compassion and the insight we need.

It's election time. Learn the programs of the candidates for social justice and vote. And the presidential debates will begin soon. I've included in the bulletin this week a sheet to be used in listening to the debates. There's a thumbnail sketch of each of the seven areas our Bishops consider important in deciding for whom to vote. No one candidate meets all of the criteria. Some of the debates may focus on only one or two of these areas, so there will be sheets available each week in the back of church. Maybe invite some friends over as you listen and share what you heard in light of what the Church teaches. Listen, talk about it and pray for discernment so that we may not be blinded by ordinary time and regret our inactivity.

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