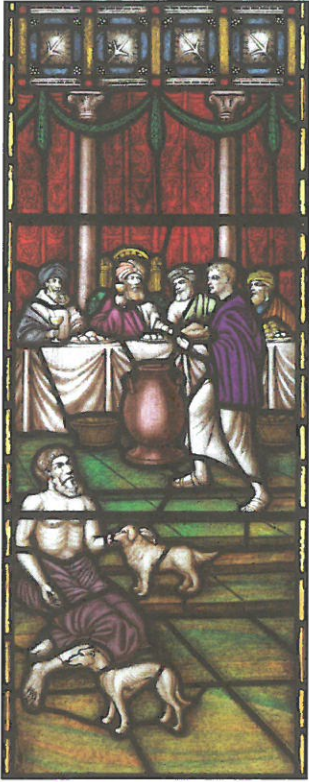


SUNDAY PLUS

Prioritise



The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, St Mary Abbot's Church, London. Renata Sedmakova / Shutterstock.com

When innocence becomes a crime

by Fr Denis McBride
C.Ss.R.

The rich man in today's parable is portrayed as a figure of complete self-indulgence. With outer garments coloured purple – from a very expensive dye from the murex shellfish – and undergarments of fine linen, the rich man wears one of the most expensive outfits known in the ancient world. He dines sumptuously – not once a week, but every day – and it appears he hardly comes up for air, given his commitment to feasting. In contrast to the rich man who

feasts every day, Lazarus is portrayed as a helpless beggar who receives nothing but the unwanted attention of street-dogs. He is the only person ever named in the parables – a name which means "He whom God helps". As the rich man is covered in expensive garments, Lazarus is covered in ulcers, and he is so weak that he cannot ward off the scavenging dogs. He has become dog food. Lazarus has been educated to have humble hopes; he does not expect to dine at the rich man's table, only to eat the scraps that fall from the table. He waits in vain.

The next scene shifts to the after-life where the rich man suffers in

torment and Lazarus is the favoured guest at the heavenly banquet. While on earth the rich man accepted the poverty and suffering of Lazarus as an acceptable part of the human landscape. The rich man knows Lazarus' name: it was his apathy which proved grounds for damnation. He did not abuse Lazarus or assault him. He did nothing when confronted by a poor beggar at his gate. It was the rich man's so-called innocence that constituted his crime.

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications: www.rpbooks.co.uk

See truthfully

by Max Mathews

Amos' reading warns that those leading lives of extravagance will be first to go into exile – "the revelry of the loungers shall pass away" – if they do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph: here, meaning that they are self-interested, ignoring the plight of the poor.

The message is not so much one of preventing entry to the Kingdom for those who are well-off, but is, instead, a message of comfort to those less fortunate and, above all, a reminder to see through outward luxury.

While Lazarus lay hungry at the rich man's gate one might see the homeowner, clad in purple and fine linen, contrasted with a poor man covered with sores and, judging

the book by its cover, assume superficially who was destined for spiritual salvation and who was not.

"Blessed are the poor", promises Luke. You could add: blessed are you who see truthfully the merit of things beyond their transient worldly value, for yours is the Kingdom of God.

Max Mathews is a young Catholic who is studying to become a journalist.

"We all have an angel who is always beside us, who never abandons us and helps us not to lose our way... No one walks alone, and none of us can think he is alone: this companion is always there".

Pope Francis

Saint and sinner

by Sr Janet Fearn
FMDM

One bitterly cold morning, travelling on the bus to work at Vatican Radio, I watched as a ragged, homeless man boarded and looked for an empty seat. He found one: sitting next to me. Looking at his stained coat, bandaged foot and dirty hands, I felt deep gratitude that I have almost no sense of smell. However, I could – and did – imagine all sorts of bugs and fleas heading in my direction. I spent the rest of the journey totally distracted, trying to think kindly and non-judgementally but completely failing to do so. I breathed an invisible sigh of relief when my bus stop appeared and I could leave my uninvited companion behind me.

"Don't forget your scarf", he called, straining to pick it up from the floor where I'd unknowingly let it fall. Despite his bandaged foot, he stood to attract my attention and to give me my scarf when he didn't have one himself.

The homeless man was the teacher that day and I, the learner. He was the saint and I, the sinner. May God bless him.

Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.

Lord, I think that my Guardian Angel must feel very neglected and your other angelic messengers even more so. Help me to be more alert to their presence in my life and to be grateful for their protection. Amen.

Today:
Amos 6:1, 4-7
1 Timothy 6:11-16
Luke 16:19-31

Monday:
Zechariah 8:1-8
Luke 9:46-50

Tuesday:
Zechariah 8:20-23
Luke 9:51-56

Wednesday:
Exodus 23:20-23
Matthew 18:1-5, 10

Thursday:
Nehemiah 8:1-12
Luke 10:1-12

Friday:
Baruch 1:15-22
Luke 10:13-16

Saturday:
Baruch 4:5-12, 27-29
Luke 10:17-24

Next Sunday:
Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4
2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14
Luke 17:5-10