

26th SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME – C (September 26, 2010)

Deacon John Baker

Today's Gospel presents another challenging parable from Luke.

In the last several weeks we've heard that we must carry our own cross to be called a disciple of Jesus.

We heard that we should humble ourselves by taking the last place at the end of the banquet table.

Last week we heard the story of the dishonest steward.

He tried to serve both his master and himself and was punished for his dishonesty.

Today's Gospel presents the contrast between a very rich man and a very unattractive beggar.

The rich man has it all, the finest clothing and food that was available.

Lazarus, the beggar, has difficulty even finding a meal and survives on handouts.

If that wasn't bad enough, he is also covered with sores that make him disgusting to look at.

Both men die.

Angels carry Lazarus, the beggar, to Heaven.

The rich man finds himself suffering in the flames of hell.

Why did the rich man go to hell and Lazarus go to Heaven?

It didn't have anything to do with something that the rich man did to Lazarus.

The rich man did not commit a sin against any of the Ten Commandments.

The rich man probably never even noticed Lazarus.

To the rich man, Lazarus was just part of the scenery.

That the rich man had it all, and Lazarus had nothing, was just the way things worked in his world.

The rich man probably gave himself the credit for all his possessions.

He may have believed that Lazarus didn't do enough to better his lot in life.

The rich man's sin was that he never even noticed Lazarus.

It was not something that he did to Lazarus.

It was the fact that he did nothing for Lazarus.

I told you this parable is challenging.

I think most of us have a pretty good understanding of what is sinful.

Now the deacon is telling you, that we are all responsible, for things we may not even know exist.

That doesn't seem to be fair does it?

Did Jesus really say that?

Do you think you missed something in listening to the Gospel?

I promise I will not leave you without an explanation of why the rich man sinned by doing nothing.

But more important, why does this reading apply to each and every one of us?

Jesus always lived out the words of his own preaching.

He ministered to sinners, the poor, the sick, and the unwanted members of society.

Jesus sought out the very people that the Pharisees did not want to deal with.

St. Edward parishioners are some of the kindest and generous people that I have ever met.

Again and again, you give generously of your time, your talent and your money.

Whether it is the Fall Festival, or the Parish Council or our Catholic schools; you are there when the call for help goes out.

Whether it is our parish music ministry, or religious education teachers, or members of the Finance committee, you are there with both your talent and your time.

Whether it is for our Sister Parishes, St. Vincent de Paul, or Parish expenses, you never fail in your generosity and financial support.

Most of us are involved in ministries that are a good fit our skills and personal interests.

What more can the Deacon ask of your time?

Most of us don't exactly have any extra time looking for new causes.

But how can we expand our awareness and come to know the needs and difficulties of the chronic sick, the homeless, the dieing, and the unemployed.

How can we come to understand why Jesus loved those who had so little and was so harsh with those who led a comfortable life?

People in need for help are not exactly lying at our front door like Lazarus.

You won't see them walking around with a sign reading, "I haven't eaten today".

They don't call on the phone and ask you to talk with them for just fifteen minutes.

They won't talk about losing their home because they couldn't find a job.

They might as well be as invisible to all of us as Lazarus was to the rich man.

We probably don't even know how we can help them.

I'm not asking you to drop everything you're doing now and change your ministry for the rest of your life.

But, even just once, prepare and serve a meal at the Catholic Worker or Hospitality House.

Serve a meal at a Community Meal or the Salvation Army.

Work a couple of hours along side St. Vincent dePaul volunteers responding to problems and emergencies you would never imagine can happen to families.

Work a few hours with people, living in sub-standard rentals, building a home that will someday be theirs.

Call any nursing home and ask how you can volunteer for a couple of hours.

I could go on and on but you get the drift.

We pray these words in the Penitential rite: "I have sinned in what I have done and in what I failed to do."

There are a lot of people, with a lot of needs, out there.

They need our prayers, our time, and our willingness to show them we personally care for them.

Try it and some of you will literally run away screaming at what you see and what you learn about how some people are living.

Others will see a flame kindled in them to bring light to those in need.

Above all, Jesus' favorites will never be invisible to you again.