

26th Sunday Ordinary Time C

The rich man in the Gospel today is dressed in fine linens, eating sumptuously and enjoying life. He isn't guilty of any serious sins of commission like murder or adultery. Yet we hear from Jesus that he is denied entry into heaven. Lazarus, the poor man, on the other hand, is admitted into God's Kingdom. So what was the difference? Why was Lazarus more worthy than the rich man?

Well while the rich man didn't commit any serious sins of *commission* he was in fact guilty of serious sins of *omission*. We hear that, by his own *inactions*, he ends up in the everlasting suffering and torments of hell.

Christ is teaching us that as his followers we are called to something much more than just the avoidance of sins. We are called to be active in the world, just as he was active. Christ preached the message of morality, he healed the sick, he ministered to the poor, he died for us. He did not live a passive life. He sought to love God and neighbor just as all of us are called and obligated to do.

Often when we think of sin we do not think of those things which we have failed to do, rather, we think of those actions we have done. But remember what is recited at the Confiteor in the beginning of Mass: I confess to you my brothers and sisters that I have sinned through my own faults in what I have done and in

what I have *failed to do*. Our inactions, our self-centeredness, like the rich man's in the Gospel today harms not only us, because we do not take advantage of the many opportunities for grace, but harms others. Imagine how much the world could change if everyone would do something every day for someone else.

This reminds me of the epic movie made by Steven Spielberg in 1993 called *Schindler's List*. It is based on a true story about a Catholic businessman named Oskar Schindler who lives in Poland during WWII. He sees a great opportunity to make a ton of money by using free Jewish labor. So he makes friends with some of the higher ups in the Nazi regime and his wish is granted. He makes a lot of money and his business grows leaps and bounds. He is driven by greed. He is driven by self-centeredness.

But as he witnesses the horrors of the Nazi regime and sees the humanity of the Jewish workers, his heart begins to change. He begins to be driven by love rather than by "What is best for me?" And so with his newfound profits he begins to "buy" more Jewish workers, all in order to save their lives. In the end he is broke financially, but is rich spiritually. He had given so much to save the lives of others.

At the end of the movie the Nazi soldiers leave the town in which Schindler's factory is located. All the Jewish workers surround Oskar and begin to thank him

for the great good he had done. Yet Schindler begins to cry. He looks around at the faces of the people he saved, and he tells them, "I could have done so much more." He holds up his gold watch, and he says, "This could have bought someone's freedom." He cries out that if he had started sooner he could have saved twice as many. Every face he sees makes him think of another face that he could have saved if he had been less self-centered. He is completely distraught. Schindler had experienced firsthand the destructive power of the sin of omission.

My brothers and sisters, we are called to so much more than just avoiding sin. We are called to action in imitation of the life of Jesus Christ.

A few years ago the movie *Pay it Forward* was released. In this movie a young boy does three kind deeds for three people. In turn those people had to perform a kind deed for three people themselves. It could be called a charitable pyramid scheme.

We are called to perform good deeds every day and that is your homework assignment for this week. Every day this week I would like you to perform at least one good deed for someone else. We know that when we do this we can win many graces for not only ourselves but for others as well. With this grace, this supernatural and divine "Gatorade" for our soul, we grow in holiness, in virtue

and are less inclined to sin. We certainly don't want to end up like the rich man who, because of his inaction and self-centeredness, ends up apart from God for all eternity and begs for the pains of hell to end. We want instead to imitate Christ, grow in love for others, and become holy persons of selflessness and action. It may be difficult here and now, but the reward is everlasting happiness.