

26th Sunday or Ordinary Time (C)

September 26, 2010

The world teaches us to seek to be comfortable, complacent, and make life easy.

To achieve this goal, we have things such as lazy-boy chairs that massage us as we recline and drift off to sleep and cars with heated seats, GPS, and top of the line stereo systems for our listening pleasure.

We strive to find just the right job / career where we'll have to do minimal work and still get paid top dollar.

And we avoid conflict as much as possible – even if this means avoiding our own family and friends.

The worst point of it all is that we've all bought into this mentality at one point or another...including myself.

I can remember my third summer as a seminarian – the summer I had to do a CPE – Clinical Pastoral Experience – in a hospital.

As the assignments were being worked out, I requested to be assigned to a hospital in Indiana rather than in Columbus because I believed the hospital in Indiana would be an easier assignment for me.

I was told the hospital in Columbus – Children's Hospital – was intense and I didn't want intense...I wanted to be comfortable and to avoid being challenged as much as possible.

But, that wasn't God's plan for me.

I was assigned to Children's Hospital in Columbus and it was indeed intense and challenging.

But through that experience, I came to recognize and improve upon myself and my gifts for ministry.

And this is why we are challenged, stretched, and encouraged NOT to be comfortable or complacent – namely, to grow as individuals and to recognize our gifts and talents and then use them for the glory of God.

We hear more of this in our readings today.

In our First Reading, Amos warns against being complacent and comfortable.

Those who seek this will be the first to be exiled – in other words, they will be the first to lose their unity with God.

Then, in our Gospel Reading, we hear the parable of a rich man and a poor man named Lazarus.

Here too, the rich man, who was comfortable during his life, received the appropriate judgment at his death – a disconnection with Abraham and thus, with the Lord.

Now, this did not happen necessarily because he was rich or comfortable.

And those who are rich and comfortable are not necessarily evil or villains just as those who are poor are not necessarily heroic or virtuous.

Rather, this was his judgment because in the small world he created for himself, surrounded by all his possessions, he failed to recognize not only his brother in need, but also the Lord who lovingly blessed him with all his gifts and talents.

And so, the lesson for us to take away from this parable is how do we give thanks to the Lord for all our gifts, blessings, and talents?

It is the Lord who gives food to the hungry, sets captives free, gives sight to the blind, raises up those who are bowed down, loves the just, protects strangers, sustains all of us, gives us eternal life, and shall reign forever (Psalm 146).

I think we all can agree on this.

Now given this, how do we show the proper gratitude to the Lord who has given us all this and more?

Perhaps one suggestion is to start with our attitude and attention towards our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and even strangers we encounter on a daily basis.

For instance, when we genuinely love and spend time with our spouse, children, and grandparents, we give thanks to God.

When we share our time, energy and resources with our friends and neighbors by offering to cut their grass, shovel their snow, watch their kids while they run a few errands, we give thanks to God.

When we offer our assistance to a co-worker, even if it means staying late at work, when we greet strangers at the grocery store with a smile, when we let that person go in front of us at the gas station, we give thanks to God.

When we authentically give of ourselves and from our resources to another, we give thanks to God.

Just imagine if we all practiced this generosity and care for one another and for God...imagine how much better the world would be and how much more peaceful our death and judgment before God would be.

If we did this, I guarantee we would not be asking for a “do-over” or for the chance to “go back and try again.”

This would not be the case if we recognized our gifts and talents that God has blessed us with by genuinely loving and caring for one another.

And so, whether we're rich or poor, may we NOT miss the opportunity to show God our appreciation of His blessings to us by sharing ourselves – all that we are and all that we have with all whom we encounter every day.