



Homily for  
THE TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
24/25 September, 2016

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**Fr. Dwayne's homily follows....**

26th Sunday – C – 2016  
September 25, 2016  
Holy Spirit (HG)

Amos 6:1a, 4-7 I Tim 6:11-16 Lk 16:19-31

- I. You probably heard the news last week that stuntman Eddie Braun successfully jumped the Snake River Canyon in Idaho. He achieved a goal his idol, Evel Knievel, was not able to accomplish back in 1974. The project was three years in the making and cost a lot of money! It seems human beings like to cross chasms. We have a long history in doing this:
  - at one time, sailors set off into the horizon to see what was out there, discovering new lands for exploration
  - we've flown into space and landed men on the moon
  - technology bridges the chasm of isolation, enabling us to communicate with almost anyone on the planet – instantaneously
  - medical advances enable us to treat and cure diseases that would have seemed unattainable only a few years ago Yes, we could write a long list of many examples citing how we human beings have crossed chasms - particularly those dealing with tangible, measurable things. But, it seems, crossing the chasms of indifference and complacency in the human heart, is a lot bigger chasm than the Snake River Canyon or going to the moon.
  
- II. The distance between the rich man and Lazarus was vast – even though poor Lazarus was on the rich man's doorstep. There is a huge contrast between the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man is dressed in linen and purple (very expensive and rare garments for his day), he dined sumptuously every day (not just once-in- awhile) and he probably lived in some type of mansion or palace. Lazarus, on the other hand, was probably dressed in rags, lying at the rich man's door, hoping just to eat the scraps from the table. The

chasm, obviously, isn't measured in feet, but defined by the complacency in the rich man's heart. Jesus doesn't tell us in the parable that the rich man was mean or unkind to Lazarus; it doesn't say he intentionally or directly denied Lazarus anything. The rich man did know Lazarus' name, because in the afterlife, in his conversation with Abraham, he identifies him by name. *It was just that the rich man didn't care.*

III. This, obviously, is a parable that perfectly fits us today. I hope you see yourself in this parable; I know I see myself. Each of us is susceptible to the sin of complacency. In the first reading Amos rails against the wealthy who are complacent: lying upon beds of ivory, stretched comfortably on their couches, eating sumptuously, just like the rich man in Jesus' parable, listening to music, drinking wine from bowls (not glasses) and anointing themselves with the best oils. Amos condemns them – not because they are rich, but because they are complacent. Regardless of our material means – whether we are rich or poor – complacency is a disease which can invade our heart. Complacency holds us back from caring – and really doing something about the crying needs we know are all around us.

As I think about complacency, I am reminded of the scientific definition of inertia: an object in motion tends to stay in motion; an object at rest tends to stay at rest. How do we get out of this inertia?

IV. The Lazarus' are on our doorstep. They are not far away in a distant city: our lives are filled with people who are Lazarus to us. And like the rich man knew Lazarus' name, so we know they are there. Yet, the chasm between us is deep.

One time Mother Teresa gave advice to people who wanted to walk beside her and minister to the poor in India – she said, “Find your own Calcutta.” In other words – look at the needs right where you are. Bloom where you're planted – and reach out to those in your home, your neighborhood, your work place.

We just need to open our eyes and see the Lazarus' on our doorstep – identify those people you can reach out to.

I recall – years ago as a newly ordained priest – my heart ached for reaching out to do something for the poor. I was teaching full time – and even though I loved what I was doing – I felt like something was missing. I felt like I wanted to do something, at least symbolic, to connect with the poor. It took me quite some time to break out of my inertia, my complacency, until I finally came across the idea of adopting children in a mission land. I settled upon adopting two children in India. One day – after all this time of an aching heart, of searching and yearning, I received an envelope naming the children I had adopted with information about them. As I read through the information, I was almost overcome with emotion. I felt like, finally, I was doing something: I was demonstrating care in some tangible way.

V. Perhaps one way to break out of this chasm of inertia, this complacency, is to find at least a few simple, tangible things to do to get the ball rolling. And once we start to move, we can only hope we remain on object in motion.

The things we do to cross this chasm may not be grandiose, but the simple things we do may just be a way for God's grace to work. The food I donate, the stranger I welcome, the expectant mother I affirm, the lonely person I talk to, the teenager I give time to, may just be a way for

God to work through me. God may be communicating through us a message of hope, assurance, comfort, courage and peace.

VI. May the sumptuous banquet we dine on today – this Eucharist – be the food we need to break free of complacency in our hearts and respond to the needs of Jesus' brothers and sisters.