

XXVI Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year C

Homily - World Day of Migrants and Refugees

Johannesburg, 28.09.2025

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[Am 6,1a.4-7](#), [1Tm 6,11-16](#), [Lc 16,19-31](#)

Dear brothers and sisters:

This Sunday's Gospel passage portrays two contrasting figures who suggest two possible ways of living the journey of existence. One of them, depicted in a positive light, is the poor man Lazarus. Unlike the rich man, we learn his name (cf. Luke 16:19), which in Hebrew means "God has helped" or "the one who is helped by God," Yes, this person is poor in terms of material goods, but he has so much more than the other protagonist of the narrative, who remains nameless. He possesses the greater good, that which renders his life truly precious: the presence of God!

Dear friends, this goes along with what Pope Leo XIV wrote in his *Message* for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees for this year, which we are celebrating today: "Many migrants, refugees and displaced persons are privileged witnesses of hope. Indeed, they demonstrate this daily through their resilience and trust in God, as they face adversity while seeking a future in which they glimpse that integral human development and happiness are possible." We can see Lazarus in their faces and in their stories. They are today's version of the poor Lazarus who, in his material poverty, knows how to entrust himself totally and only to God. We can go further and affirm that migrants are not only persons in search of a better future, but missionaries of hope who call upon us to not despair, to trust more in Providence, and to not retreat behind fear. They remind us that true Christian hope "does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5) because it is rooted in the merciful love of the Father

who is acting in history and never abandons us. It is this divine love that is the most precious good, and on which depends, in the final instance, the good outcome of the journey of our existence.

Secondly, I would like to emphasise where exactly the Gospel locates Lazarus: “he was at the gate” (Luke 16:20). This echoes the Book of Revelation passage that finds the Lord himself, the Living One, similarly placed: “Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me” (Rev 3:20). Deeply comparing this picture with the situation of migrants and refugees suggests another insight that can and should interest each one of us today: in the one knocking at the door, along the road of existence, we can discern a visit of God himself to our lives. Even if some such encounters can be annoying at first, it is highly likely that a gift that the Lord intends for us is hidden in every encounter with the one who is at our door. This implies the need for an attitude of openness and welcome towards all, especially towards the least, which the Church has always seen as one of its strictest duties. As Pope Francis wrote in *Evangelii gaudium*: “God’s heart has a special place for the poor” (EG 197). Accordingly, the Pope affirmed that “for the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one” (EG 198).

Dearly beloved, the strong warning that the prophet Amos gave us in the first reading points in the same direction: “Alas for those who are at ease in Zion, and for those who feel secure on Mount Samaria [...] but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph” (Amos 6:1,6)! What immense riches we risk losing when, like the rich glutton of the Gospel, we close ourselves off from those who knock on our door in so many ways! How much poorer will we become as a result of what Francis called the “globalisation of indifference”! This is so true of migrants who reach our lands in search of a better future and so often bring us the richness of their culture, traditions and ways of living the faith. These can be gifts that inspire local communities to leave behind their indifference and self-referentiality, opening themselves up for moments of encounter and solidarity. In the words of Leo XIV: “With their spiritual enthusiasm and vitality, they can help revitalize ecclesial communities that have become rigid and weighed down, where spiritual desertification is advancing at an alarming

rate.” This cannot help but offer exceptional riches to each one of us and for all the Church!

And finally, today’s Gospel is clearly oriented towards eternal life. After all, every earthly path is, in the prospective of faith, directed to what transcends the merely human horizon of our daily journey. Even the name “Lazarus”, that poor man who “was at the gate”, reminds us that the ultimate end of the itinerary of each of us on this earth is unending life in God, the full joy of his presence (cf. Psalm 16:11)! Paul’s exhortation in his first letter to Timothy can also be understood in this light: “Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Tim 6:12).

Yes, dear brothers and sisters: every time that we set out on journeys long or short, more or less demanding, we are called to remember that the goal of our voyage is always higher and more important than what we can reach on this earth: it is life eternal in God. As the Pope tells us in the *Message* for this day, “migrants and refugees remind the Church of her pilgrim dimension, perpetually journeying towards her final homeland, sustained by a hope that is a theological virtue.” This is the goal of the road of Lazarus, the goal of the travels of Paul, and the goal of the journey of life of every person and every Christian, called today to reorient with determination and hope their own geographic, and especially existential, journeys towards this destination.

I conclude, as a prayer and wish for all of us, men and women on the road, with the words of the Holy Father at the end of his message: “I wish to entrust all those who are on the journey, as well as those who are working to accompany them, to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, comfort of migrants, so that she may keep hope alive in their hearts and sustain them in their commitment to building a world that increasingly resembles the Kingdom of God, the true homeland that awaits us at the end of our journey.” Amen.