

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2016: “The Sin of Indifference”

September 24, 2016—His name is **Franco** and he makes his home on the streets of Rome. He is often greeted by the chief almsgiver of Pope Francis **Monsignor (Conrad) Kajewski**, as he travels and walks through the city. One November afternoon, after hearing confessions at a local church Monsignor met Franco and discovered that it was his 50th birthday. To celebrate the event, Monsignor invited Franco to be his guest for dinner but Franco was ashamed since he hadn't showered in weeks and declined the offer because of his stench. But, Monsignor would not take no for an answer and later said, *“I brought him with me anyway. We had Chinese and while we were at the table he told me that you can always find something to eat in Rome, but what is missing are places to wash yourself.”*

When relaying this story to his boss, Pope Francis, an idea was born and the Pope ordered showers, wash areas, and clean clothes be installed in the men's and women's bathrooms at the Vatican. What seemed to be a **huge** problem had a simple solution and, as usual, Francis' kindness and compassion to the least brethren inspired the world.

My friends, today's Gospel [Luke 16:19-31] so well known to us, tells the familiar and powerful parable of the **rich man** and **Lazarus**, but the essential truth can easily be missed.

The sin of the rich man in this Gospel was not that he ordered Lazarus off his property—he didn't kick him or shout at him as he passed him by and he didn't call the police or the palace guard to report him—rather, he just ignored him and never noticed that he was there—dismissing him as simply part of the landscape of his life. The sin of the rich man was that he failed to see the dignity in the human being who begged daily at his gate and accepted, without question, the fact that Lazarus was poor and that he was rich. But his sin of indifference was obviously no small matter, for in the end it cost him everything and his final destination for eternity was the torment he found in the fires of hell.

My friends, let us never be blinded by the indifference that is now fostered in our world. Let us never think that another person's burdens do not belong to us and that those who are oppressed or crushed do not merit, need, or deserve our help. For in the poor, the needy, and those who find no place in the hallways of power or places of honor or fame, we find the Lord Himself who told us that He would always be found in them. Born in a manger He would always be poor, and our indifference to them is our indifference to **Him**.

Allow me then, to leave you with a poem. It was spoken many years ago by the late, great Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen as he was giving a retreat to the people of the city of Birmingham, England. It is entitled *Indifference* and it speaks of Our Lord visiting their city in their very day:

When Jesus came to Golgotha
They hanged Him on a tree,
They drove great nails through hands and feet,
And made a Calvary.
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns;
Red were His wounds and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days,
And human flesh was cheap.

When Jesus came to Birmingham,
They simply passed Him by;
They never hurt a hair of Him,
They only let Him die.
For men had grown more tender,
And they would not give Him pain;
They only just passed down the street,
And left Him in the rain.

Still Jesus cried, "Forgive them,
For they know not what they do."
And still it rained the winter rain
That drenched Him through and through.
The crowds went home and left the streets
Without a soul to see;
And Jesus crouched against a wall
And cried for Calvary.

—Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy (1883-1929)

God love you.