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## THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND THE POOR LAZARUS

### The poor and the humble

Today's gospel reading refers to the parable of the rich man and the poor Lazarus. In this parable of His Christ speaks about two people: He says that in this life the rich man lived with delights and enjoyments being completely indifferent to the poor Lazarus who was suffering homeless from hunger and illnesses. After death however things change completely. Lazarus is rejoicing eternally in the bosom of Abraham, while the rich man is being tortured by unending and dreadful thirst, without there being absolutely any capability of receiving the slightest consolation.

Already from the beginning of the parable, Christ teaches us that God does not see or judge people like the majority of the world. So for this reason He gives a specific name to the poor man, He calls him Lazarus. The rich man of the parable does not have a name. In societies and in nations, whoever has much money and authority, as well as whoever has great capabilities in work or also in whatsoever other area of life, they are familiar to the majority of people, they are at center of interest, and many people are jealous of them and desire to have been in their place. God however, giving a name to Lazarus, reveals – speaking in a human way of course – that to Him, Lazarus who was scorned by the majority, is familiar to Him. We would say that the center of God's interest falls on those who escape the gaze of the many. This great interest and His familiarity to the poor and humble people, to the people in general whom society places off to the side, He reveals in many spots of the Holy Scripture.

Often in the Scripture He stresses that He loves and defends the widow, the poor person and the foreigner, whereas in the parable of judgment, He adopts in His person and characterizes as His brother, the poor, sick, foreign and imprisoned person. Just as one drop of water is nothing before an ocean, thus, also innumerable times more, this life is nothing in comparison to eternity. Lazarus who

is here poor and unknown to the majority, will be eternally known and surnamed to God and to the saints, whereas he who in this life is famous and enviable to the majority of people, the rich man, remains eternally foreign and anonymous to God and to the saints.

### **The rich and poor people**

At this spot, it must be clarified that neither all rich people are beforehand condemned, neither also are all poor people beforehand saved. This truth is already declared by the present parable. It is mentioned that Lazarus went to the bosom of Abraham. We know from the Old Testament that Abraham was very wealthy. So Christ purposely doesn't say that Lazarus inherited paradise, but that he ended up in the bosom of Abraham, in order to denote among other things, that neither did Lazarus go to paradise only because of his poverty, nor was the rich man condemned to hades because he was wealthy. One of the most basic inhabitants of paradise, and furthermore a symbol of paradise, is the very rich and famous in this life, Abraham. This great saint of the Old Testament was sanctified, because he showed complete faith and dedication to God. He used his wealth, to help his fellow man and to offer hospitality to the travelers of that time.

The rich man however, of the parable did not believe in God, and used his wealth in order to be dressed brilliantly and to live with enjoyments and luxurious meals. He was indifferent to the misfortune of his neighbor, and was interested only in his own self. His lack of compassion comprised the unquenching firewood of hell.

On the other hand, Lazarus was saved and was justified because of his good thoughts, patience and fortitude in the unbearable trials and afflictions which were created by hunger, illness, scorn and the indifference of others, as well as by the fact that he continually remained across from a man who prospered and was fortunate in all of his life, while he was in a wretched state. Neither did he make a blasphemous thought, nor did he mutter a bitter word, nor did he despair, nor did he get frustrated before God or before man. So for this reason also God honored him to be taken up after death by angels and to be placed in the heart of paradise. So neither are all wealthy people damned, but whoever doesn't suffice in the necessities of life and uses his wealth for his own benefit and is indifferent to others. Nor again are all poor people saved, but only whoever believes in God, keeps His commandments and doesn't murmur, or blaspheme.

So let us not fear, either poverty, or illnesses, or scorn. Also, let us not admire the rich and luxurious and carefree life. Let us fear one thing alone: let us not be proved unworthy of the love and mercy of God. And let us admire only one thing: the pious and virtuous life, because this can lead us, like the poor Lazarus, to the bosom of the righteous Abraham. Amen.

Archim. P. K.