

*Homily for March 1<sup>st</sup> 2018*

There is a theme that runs through the Bible that can be summarized this way.

***“We are to love people and use things, not to love things and use people.”***

When we get the order wrong and love things and use people we end up with spiritual heart disease. What does such heart disease look like? Jesus tells us in the story from Luke about the rich man and Lazarus.

The rich man was so preoccupied with his good things, like his fine suits and gourmet meals that his soul was closed to generosity. There was the poor man Lazarus of whom Jesus says:

***lay at the rich man’s gate, full of sores,<sup>21</sup> who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.***

However the rich man had no concern for Lazarus during their earthly lives, when the poor man was in need. But now that they are both beyond the grave and the rich man is in hades/the place of separation from God. He wants to use Lazarus for his own ends, to alleviate his suffering and to send a warning to his family.

Jesus’ story is so poignant. If people live their lives using people and loving things when it comes to the world beyond the grave they will have realized too late they had been living in a kind of hell. The heart disease had become so severe that their torment will now be interminable, everlasting.

Pope St Gregory the Great observed:

***What was the rich man’s sin? Simply he did not notice Lazarus. He eliminated him from his consciousness. He did not use his goods according to God’s wishes. For it was not poverty that lead Lazarus to heaven, but humility. Nor was it wealth that prevented the rich man from attaining eternal rest but his self-centeredness and lack of care.***

Jeremiah also warns us:

***“Cursed is the man who trusts in man  
and makes flesh his arm,  
whose heart turns away from the LORD.***

When we love things and use people we are like the man who turns away from the Lord as the example of the rich man so clearly illustrates. However to be like Lazarus who in his poverty had no one else to trust he turns to the Lord, so too we in humility remember that we need the Grace and Love of Christ. Why do we need this kind of humility? So as to enable us to live as those

who use things and love people for their greater good and the glory of God. Such a person is described in this way by Jeremiah, who echoes psalm 1.

**<sup>7</sup>“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,  
whose trust is the LORD.  
<sup>8</sup>He is like a tree planted by water,  
that sends out its roots by the stream,  
and does not fear when heat comes,  
for its leaves remain green,  
and is not anxious in the year of drought,  
for it does not cease to bear fruit.”**

To make the Lord our trust means that our souls are always open to conversion so that we want to live in such a way that generosity, kindness, goodness, respect for others and seeing that each person has dignity is honoured and upheld. . To live like this in the present is so important because it is the very thing Moses and the Prophets in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament taught. It is the way of bring heaven to earth so that one day we might go from earth to heaven where love is always first.