

GOD WANTS US TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT OTHER PEOPLES' PLIGHT

The following questions will help us in our reflection today: 1. Does it matter how I treat others? 2. What does my neighbor's suffering have to do with me? 3. Can I continue living in comfort while bypassing those around me who are in misery? Today's first reading (Amos 6:1a, 4-7) presented us with how God, through Prophet Amos, showed His displeasure with the wealthy elites in the capital city of Jerusalem because they neglected or were indifferent about the plight of the other Israelites. Amos prophesied to these wealthy elites that they will one day share in the plight of those they neglected. Eventually, when the king of Babylon invaded them, these elites were the first to be taken to exile where they suffered and were not able to enjoy the type of good life they had before. Today, I am talking to you like Prophet Amos. Around your neighborhood, in your workplace, in your parish, and among your friends and enemies, is there any person struggling to meet his or her basic needs, and which you, in good conscience, could easily help that person? For a better understanding of the consequences of our unconcern or indifference to peoples' plight. Recently, I heard a story about a poor family who was surrounded by neighbors who were materially blessed. God brought this poor family closer to these rich neighbors to assist them, but instead, the rich neighbors neglected the plight of the poor family. This poor family had only a son and after the death of this poor boy's parents due to malnutrition and inaccessibility to good medical care, the boy joined a robbery gang. When the boy was arrested, after committing several crimes including stealing from his former rich neighbors, he narrated how he desired when he was a teenager to be a healthcare professional or practitioner to help in saving lives, but his dreams were shattered because his parents could not afford his education. I decided to tell this brief story not for us to pity the poor boy or to judge him or criticize the wealthy neighbors but for us to see what can happen when we neglect to make the positive impact we can make in peoples' lives. The poor boy would have been either a medical doctor or a nurse or a social worker based on his dreams or anything better than an armed robber, if his rich neighbors who witnessed his level of poverty, tried to help him as they could have. In the Gospel reading today (Luke 16:19-31), Jesus presented us with a story of a rich man who, even though God blessed him with lots of food, neglected or was unperturbed about the plight of a sick poor man, Lazarus, who was lying at his door hungry. The hungry Lazarus did not need much; the scraps of food that fell from the rich man's table would have been enough for him, but he was not given any. Despite the plight of Lazarus, he was generous to the dogs; he allowed the dogs to lick his sores. The

rich man failed to learn kindness from Lazarus. WE DO NOT HAVE TO HAVE EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD BEFORE WE BECOME KIND AND WE DO NOT NEED TO BE FREE FROM PROBLEMS BEFORE WE COMFORT THOSE HAVING CHALLENGES. After the death of both the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man was rewarded with a life of misery for neglecting to use the gifts he received from God to help Lazarus. And Lazarus was rewarded with a good life that he did not have on earth. It is surprising that the rich man who did not care about the plight of Lazarus during their earthly life, in their afterlife, wants Lazarus to be kind to him when he saw Lazarus living the good life which he denied him on earth. It was pointed out to the rich man that Lazarus cannot help him at that point in time. Jesus pointed out that the measure we use for others, the same measure will be used for us (Luke 6:38). If we want God to be merciful to us, we must be merciful to others. How we relate to others on earth will be among the things that will determine our fate when we leave this earth and when we die, we cannot redo our wrongs. Jesus advised us while still living on earth to treat others as we would like to be treated (Mathew 7:12). If the rich man was kind to Lazarus when he was living a good life, Lazarus would have been encouraged to reciprocate the kindness when the man was in misery. "May each of us use some of what we have been blessed with...time, talent, or treasure...to ease the burden of others in our families, communities, and world...and to carry on Christ's work in our diocese and in our Area Faith Community" (Fr. Jerry). May God help us to be good to others, AMEN.