



September 28, 2025

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*"Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established
to prevent anyone from crossing..." Luke 16:26*



Dear Friends,

Midas was the mythical king of Phrygia in what is now modern Turkey. Midas had shown hospitality to a drunken woodland spirit, a friend of the god Dionysius. In gratitude, Dionysios promises to give Midas anything for which he wishes. Midas wishes that whatever he touches should turn gold. This wish becomes a curse. His food turns gold, he can't eat. He embraced his daughter who turned into a golden statue. Midas begs Dionysios to reverse the wish. The god instructs Midas to wash his hands in the River Pactolus, which washed away the curse. This story reminds us to remember what is really important and be careful what we wish for.

In the fourth century AD, came the historical figure of St Basil of Caesarea a city also in Turkey. He was born into a religious and politically influential family. In contrast to Midas, Basil wanted to live humbly and simply the Gospel of Christ. He formed a large community of nuns and monks working with physicians and lay people to provide food, clothing, shelter and medical assistance to the poor. Later he became a priest and then a bishop but always kept the vision of a community life that does not run from the world but embraces the pain and sorrow of the world.

Christian faith teaches us that everything belongs to God. What we have is ours to use for our own needs but over that must be shared with others. Basil criticized the greedy rich who hoarded wealth for themselves. He said they *"bury their money and despise the oppressed."* For Basil the poor were not simply a class who happen to be at the bottom of the economic hierarchy. Nor were they at fault for their poverty. They were the oppressed poor. Basil states, *"When someone steals a person's clothes, we call him a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? ...The money which you hoard up belongs to the poor."*

Basil's work was the start of a social revolution. The institutions for the poor he founded became a large complex called the Basiliad. It was located outside the city. Centuries later when the Caesarea fell into ruins, Basil's 'new city' was still thriving. What Basil did was new. The idea of a hospital which cares for all, including the poor, was revolutionary. There had been places that cared for the sick but only for those who could pay. Basil started a new trend where we care for the poor. After he died hospitals sprang up throughout the Roman Empire. In a sense the modern idea of the hospital is in origin a distinctively Christian institution.

In today's Gospel, in the story of poor Lazarus and the rich man we are told about a chasm. When Lazarus died, he rests *"in the bosom of Abraham"* in paradise. The rich man also dies, and he finds that he is in a place of suffering. He sees Lazarus, whom he ignored the whole time they were alive. He treats the poor man as a tool to order around to get what he wants. Abraham points out the chasm between them. That chasm was not created by God but by the greedy rich man. That chasm opened when he was alive and refused to see poor Lazarus lying at his door. Like King Midas the rich man is cursed by his own greed.

The Gospel challenges us to see our responsibility for each other and especially the poor. A chasm has opened in our own country between the billionaire class and the rest of us. Oligarchs have decimated the institutions and structures that serve the mass of the people so the greedy rich can have more. They are crushing what's left of the middle class and robbing the poor of life and health. We face a choice. Do we let the oligarchs take us on the path of selfishness. Or, like Basil, do we build a new society that reflects God's care for all? Everyone has a basic human right to life, food, shelter, education, and health care. Let us build the city of God and hope it is not too late!

Peace,

Fr Ron

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