

Homily 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year C. 28/29 September 2019.

To be poor is to lack the means needed so as to live in a proper and dignified way in our society. We often think that this comes down to lack of money. While this is true for many, it's far from being the only lack that handicaps people from living their lives to the full. Other means that are frequently in absence are a lack of education, skills and knowledge, easy access to services and agencies, language difficulties, a shortage of mobility options and limitations on the availability of communication.

When our Bishop's write to us with their Social Justice Statement as they've done this weekend they choose a topic of relevance. This year they've decided to write about our lives and behaviour in our digital on-line age, a topic most relevant across all age and cultural spectrums. The fact is that growing numbers of our fellow Australians are unable to avail themselves of digital and internet means of communication. This comes at a time when it's more the norm than the exception to learn, interact and transact daily on-line.

Some people don't have the skills and knowledge necessary to use digital devices, nor do they understand all of the subtleties needed when on-line. Others simply can't afford to buy connected devices, or they can't afford the market rate being asked for internet connectivity. Still others find that, because of where they live and work, the internet isn't available, or that its of 3rd world quality, making them feel like 2nd class citizens.

The rich man, who had no name, had all the means needed to live a full life in his society, culture and times. The poor man named Lazarus had none. He was poor because he lacked the means. As the story put it he lacked every means, lying at the gate of the rich man's house, alone, starving and sick unto death. When Lazarus died, he was taken into heaven, being held close by Abraham, the great patriarch. He had a future and that future was comforting and eternal. As for the rich man, when his time was up, Jesus said only that he was buried and forgotten. Next, we heard that he was in torment in Hades without any hope of relief. What's more, Jesus said that a great big gulf had been fixed between him and Heaven stopping all crossing to where Lazarus now dwelt. The rich man had sinned against God and neighbour by commission and by omission. He'd amassed his wealth with indifference, all the while ignoring Lazarus' plight, so obvious to him. His failure in generosity and thoughtfulness, as the parable told us, had eternal consequences.

The gulf between those of us with the means to understand and access our connected world with all of its services and knowledge in the age of the internet, and our many family, friends and neighbours who lack such means, is growing ever wider. This is something we need to consider deeply when thinking about our sins and moral lives, at least as much as we do other matters. If we possess the means to be connected, then we must be thoughtful of those who lack such ability. The onus is on us to be generous with what we have, lest the gulf widen further cleaving our social fabric, growing then to an unbridgeable chasm in the life to come.