Sunday Homily: World Day of the Poor

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time | Full Transcript

When my mother died, my siblings and I were planning the funeral, and we were doing that along with the priest. And we were at a loss as to what we could use as a first reading, because my mother had chosen the second reading and the Gospel reading, but not the first one.

And then the priest suggested that we should use that reading that we had as our first reading at Mass today from the Book of Proverbs. Because indeed, she was a good woman, a good wife, a good mother. And one of the things that we were sure that she always did: she reached out her hands to the poor and to the needy. That's what we heard in that first reading.

And why am I using that? Because in another place, when St. Paul was writing his letter to the Ephesians, he saw the relationship of the Church with God as a kind of a marital relationship. So the Church has been described as the Bride of Christ. And clearly, when Christ found the Church, he found a good bride. He gave up everything for this bride, the Church. Because if we want to know what Christ's dowry was for the Church, we only have to look up there. He gave himself.

And by giving himself, he was saying that somehow the Church should do just as he did, because he was one who also reached out his hand to the poor and to the needy. And somehow, that is part of the responsibility of the Church today.

So today we're celebrating the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. And if you can remember, far back to 2015, Pope Francis declared a Year of Mercy. Do you remember that? He declared the Year of Mercy. And at the end of the Year of Mercy, he wrote a letter, Misericordia et misera, or the other way around, you know. But it was misery and mercy. Misery and mercy. And in that letter, he declared that the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, from henceforth, would be declared as the World Day of the Poor. You knew that, didn't you? Oh.

So you see, as a Missionary of Mercy, it's one of the things that I have to keep declaring and putting before persons: to remember the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time as the World Day of the Poor. Because one of the responses that this diocese made to that is that on the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, there is a special collection for Catholic Charities. Good, you see? So now you probably realize why I'm also involved with Catholic Charities. Because it is a ministry of mercy, always reminding us that we should reach out our hands to the poor and to the needy.

And why do we do that? Because we are the Church. We are the Church, the Bride of Christ, and that is what we do.

But so very often, we forget who we are as the Church. And St. Paul reminds us of that in our second reading. He says to us that we are people of light, people of light and of the day. We are not the people of darkness. And Jesus had said that we should let our lives so shine before others that they may see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven.

And so we have to do this. We have to shed light on this world because, my dear sisters and brothers, the world is still in darkness, and we have to keep on making our light shine.

So we too have been given gifts or talents. And what do we do with these gifts? How do we use the gifts that we have in the service of our poor sisters and brothers? How do we use them?

So you could see in the Gospel that the man who got five, he really went and invested that. And so he could present five more. The one with two, who also recognized that he was a child of the light, he went and he invested and brought another two. The other person, the one with the one, he went and he buried his talent, because he wanted to keep that talent in the darkness.

So you can tell me which hole there is where there is light. Every hole is a dark hole. And so he buried that.

How then are we living our Christian life? Is it set on a lampstand where others can see the light? Or have we buried it? Have we buried our gifts and talents? And they are buried if we do not shine. And if our sisters and brothers, the poor of the world, if they do not benefit from what we have, we are living in darkness.

And so Pope Francis in that letter said that as long as Lazarus continues to lie at our doorstep, we are in darkness. As long as Lazarus continues to lie on our doorstep, we are in darkness. So, have you seen Lazarus recently? Have you seen the Lazaruses that are around who are lying out there?

It is those persons that Catholic Charities is trying to minister to in so many different ways, to try to bring people out of their darkness and to bring them into the light of Christ. That is the responsibility of the Church. You are the Church. I am the Church. We're the Church. That is our responsibility.

So, thinking about St. Margaret Mary, since this is where I'm preaching now, is St. Margaret Mary like that good wife? That good wife. That good wife who is always at work, and that good wife who keeps reaching out her hands to the poor? Because you are St. Margaret Mary. And only you can answer that question.

All I can say to you: just let your light shine. So that maybe one of these days, well, not in my lifetime, but hopefully in the lifetime of some of the young ones sitting here, that this World Day of the Poor will be eliminated. Although we may have heard in Scripture that the poor we have always with us. And if they're always with us, it means they're always with us so that we can minister to them.

So let us not bury our talents, but let us get out there and work for our sisters and brothers who are poor.