Homily for the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time(9/29/2019)

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In surgery for a heart attack, a middle-aged woman had a vision of God by her bedside. “Will I die?” she asked. God said, “No. You have 30 more years to live.” With 30 years to look forward to, she decided to make the best of it. So, since she was in the hospital, she got breast implants, liposuction, a tummy tuck, hair transplants, and collagen injections in her lips. She looked great!

The day she was discharged, she exited the hospital with a swagger, crossed the street, and was immediately hit by a car and killed. Up in heaven, she saw God. “You said I had 30 more years to live,” she complained. “That’s true,” said God. “So, what happened?” she asked. God shrugged, “I didn’t recognize you.”

Today, we have a powerful parable from the Lord that speaks about death, about life, and about our eternal life.

Death is a fact of our life. We will all die. We don’t know where, don’t know when, but it will come. Death can often come suddenly and unexpectedly as with people killed in the terrorist attacks, accidents, or in natural disaster. We don’t know where or when the Lord will come to us. Are we prepared? Death is a fact of our life!

The second point of this parable is about our life. We pass this way but once. Abraham says to the rich man that there is no going back to his brothers. There is no return, no second take. The days or years we waste do not come back. Are we using the time we have to know, love, and serve the Lord in this world and be happy with Him forever in the next? How are we using the life and graces we are given? We have only one life to live.

In our brief time on earth, how should we seize the opportunities to act charitably, to give generously, or to help and love one another, and to be happy?

In the parable, after the rich man die, he is condemned to eternal torment. He is not condemned because he is wealthy. He did not make Lazarus poor. The judgment against the rich man is based not on what he did, but on what he didn’t do. Lazarus sits by the gate, poor and starving. The rich man doesn’t care about him. He lost forever his chance for doing good. How can we avoid the fate of this rich man?

Everyone wants to be happy. We always look for love, security, and happiness. Where is true love? Where is true security? Where is real happiness?

Jesus once said to His disciples, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all things shall be added to you.” The ‘all things’ He spoke of were the basic needs of life: food, drink, clothes, shelter. He told us not to make these things the chief goal of our lives, but to seek first the Kingdom of God. This is a secret of happiness.

Few months ago, I visited a man to give the holy communion and the Last Rites. He was wealthy and successful, the envy of all his friends and business associates. But, as I talked to him, he broke down in tears, confessing that he was miserable inside. Wealth had not been able to fill the empty place in his heart.

A few days later, I visited another man, who lived only a few miles away, for the anointing of the sick. His house was humble, and he had almost nothing in the way of this world’s possessions. Yet, his face was radiant as he told me about the work he was doing for the church, and how Jesus had filled his life with meaning and purpose. He looked so happy.

I went away convinced that the second man was really the richer man. Although he had very little, he had learned to be thankful for everything God had given him. A spirit of thankfulness and humility make all the different.

Try putting Christ first, and watch how your life is turned around. You will discover that He alone is the source of the love, peace, and joy you have been looking for.

As St. Paul says to Timothy in the second reading, we are called to pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness, and to keep the commands of Jesus to love God and to love our neighbor, all the times, every day, at every opportunity.