

For the Homeless

Opening Song: The Cry of the Poor

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

(pause)

All: Sing to God, sing praises to God's name.
Make way for the One who rides upon the clouds.
God's name is Yahweh.
Rejoice and dance for joy.
Father of the fatherless, mother of the orphan,
and protector of the weak is God.
God gives the forsaken a home in which to dwell
and leads out the prisoners to freedom;
but the rebellious dwell in parched land.
(Psalm 69:4-6)

First Reading

“As pastors we have seen firsthand the faces of poverty in our midst. Homeless people roam city streets in tattered clothing and sleep in doorways or on subway grates at night. Many of these are former mental patients released from state hospitals. Thousands stand in line at soup kitchens because they have no other way of feeding themselves. Millions of children are so poorly nourished that their physical and mental development are seriously harmed. We have also seen the growing economic hardship and insecurity experienced by moderate-income Americans when they lose their jobs and their income due to forces beyond their control. These are alarming signs and trends. They pose for our nation an urgent moral and human challenge: to fashion a society where no one goes without the basic material necessities required for human dignity and growth.”

--National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Building Economic Justice*

Reflection – “Another Day in Paradise” by Phil Collins

(While reflecting on the above reading and listening to the music, review how you have treated the homeless people you've encountered.)

Response

Right: In you, Yahweh, I take refuge;
let me never be disgraced.
Be a sheltering rock for me,
and a walled fortress to save me!

Left: Take pity on me, Yahweh;
I am in trouble now. (*continue on next page*)

Sorrow consumes my eyes,
my throat, my inmost parts.

Right: For my life is worn out with sadness,
my years with sighs
my strength collapses under misery,
and my bones are wasting away.

Left: To every one of my oppressors
I am contemptible;
loathsome to my neighbors,
and to my friends a thing of fear.

Right: Those who see me in the street hurry past me.
I am forgotten, as good as dead in their hearts,
something discarded.

Left: But in you, Yahweh, I trust;
I say, "You are my God."
My fate is in your hand:
rescue me from the hands of my enemies and persecutors.

All: Let your face smile upon your servant,
save me in your love.
Yahweh, how great is the goodness
reserved for those who fear you
and bestowed on those who take shelter in you,
for all to see! (Psalm 31:1-2, 9-12, 14-16, 19)

Second Reading

"As we witnessed the suffering of America's poorest citizens, we came to understand that the individual health problems of homeless people combine to form a major public health crisis. We can no longer sit as spectators to the elderly homeless dying of hypothermia, to the children with blighted futures poisoned by lead in rat-infested, dilapidated welfare hotels, to women raped, to old men beaten and robbed of their few possessions, and to people dying on the streets with catastrophic illnesses such as AIDS. Without eliminating homelessness, the health risks and concomitant health problems, the desperate plight of homeless children, the suffering, and the needless deaths of homeless Americans will continue. We agreed with the recommendations set forth in the Committee report, but we felt continuously uneasy because of our inability to state the most basic recommendation: homelessness in the United States is an inexcusable disgrace and must be eliminated."

--Supplementary Statement on Health Care for Homeless People in response to the
Institute of Medicine's report, *Homelessness, Health, and Human Needs*

Reflection

(While silently reflecting on the reading, search for ways that you might become aware of and address the needs of the homeless in America)

Response

All: Happy those who aid the poor and the lowly.
God will help them when they are in trouble.
Yahweh will protect and preserve them,
and make them happy in the land,
and will not abandon them to the power of their enemies.
Yahweh will help them when they are sick
and restore them to health.

(Psalm 41: 1-3)

Third Reading

There was a rich man who used to dress in purple and fine linen and feast magnificently every day. And at his gate there lay a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to fill himself with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even came and licked his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried.

In his torment in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off with Lazarus in his bosom. So he cried out, "Father Abraham, pity me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony I these flames." "My son," Abraham replied, "remember that during your life good things came your way, just as bad things came the way of Lazarus. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony. But that is not all: between us and you a great gulf has been fixed, to stop anyone, if he wanted to, crossing from our side to yours, to stop any crossing from your side to ours."

The rich man replied, "Father, I beg you then to send Lazarus to my father's house, since I have five brothers, to give them warning so that they do not come to this place of torment too." "They have Moses and the prophets," said Abraham, "let them listen to them." "Ah, no, father Abraham," said the rich man, "but if someone comes to them from the dead, they will repent." Then Abraham said to him, "If they will not listen to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead."

Luke 16: 19-31

Reflection: "Five Variants of 'Dives and Lazarus'" by Ralph Vaughan Williams

(While reflecting on this story told by Jesus and while listening to the music, ask God to help you to listen to his Word and put it into action.)

Petitions – Spontaneous

Our response: Jesus, whatever we do the least of our brothers and sisters,
we do to you.

Final Prayer

Right: I wish I didn't know, Lord.
I wish it were not true.
I wish I could convince myself that I'm dreaming,
I wish someone could prove that I'm exaggerating,
I wish they'd show me that all these people have only
themselves to blame, that it's their fault they are so miserable.
I'd like to be reassured, Lord, but I can't be. It's too late.
I've seen too much,
I've listen too much,
I've counted too much, and, Lord, these ruthless figures
have robbed me forever of my innocent tranquility.

(slight pause)

Left: So much the better . . .
For I, your God, your Father, am cross with you.
I gave you the world at the beginning of time, and I want each of my
children to have a home worthy of their Father in my vast kingdom.
I trusted you, and your selfishness has spoiled everything.
It's one of your most serious sins, shared by many of you.
Woe unto you if, through your fault, a single one of my children dies in
body or spirit.
I tell you, I will give to those the finest lodgings in Paradise.
But the thoughtless, the negligent, the selfish, who, well-sheltered on earth,
have forgotten others—they have had their reward.
There will be no room for them in my Kingdom.

(pause)

All: Come . . . , ask forgiveness for yourself and for others today.
And tomorrow, fight with all your strength, for it hurts your Father
to see that once more there is no more room for his Son at the inn.
-- Michel Quoist, *Prayers*

Leader: Saint John Baptist de La Salle

All: Pray for us!

Leader: Live, Jesus, in our hearts!

All: Forever!

(Prayer for the Homeless arranged by Brother Paul Fitzgerald)