

# A great chasm • Breaking open the word

Perhaps one of the worst habits that we can fall into is that of apathy, or complacency. This week's first reading and Gospel offer some stories of complacency—which, even when we are right next to each other, creates a great chasm—while Paul's letter offers a vision of what we are called to be.

Today's readings discuss worldly things—because God knows that we have to navigate our way through this world and wants to help us to find balance as physical and spiritual beings. To be truly balanced, we need to live justice and to be trustworthy. This plays out in our daily dealings, in our culture and in our politics.

The first reading is a continuation of last week's judgment of the nations. Amos had a fabulous wind-up; shining a light on the sins of the surrounding nations before lobbing a hardball at Israel, who was the most convicted of all. They are so comfortable that they forgot about God. They are so comfortable that they ignore the poor. They have forgotten that comfort is never guaranteed and often doesn't last. What will they do when their comfort is taken from them—they have no foundation and so they won't know what to do.

Paul's letter to Timothy begins with a wonderful line, "But you, man of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness." This is what we're meant to be—pursuers of virtues that bring comfort to others. If we men and women of God "compete well" by living these virtues, then we are battling complacency.

Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus (not Mary and Martha's brother that he raised from the dead in the Gospel of John) to further illustrate the dangers of apathy.

The rich man steps over Lazarus every day to get in and out of his house. He is not ignorant of Lazarus' poverty and destitution; he is fully aware and complacent. So, when they both die, Lazarus is given the compassion and comfort that he should have been given on earth; and the rich man has what he wasted on himself without sharing with those that needed it taken away from him. And still—he tries to get Lazarus to wait on him—even in death, he doesn't get it! Abraham, when the rich man wants to send Lazarus to his brothers to warn them not to follow his fate (notice, the rich man doesn't volunteer to go himself), tells him that the law and prophets are all about treating the poor with compassion and mercy—if they won't listen to that, even a man coming back from the dead won't impress them (foreshadowing of Jesus' resurrection).

You can read this Sunday's readings here:

[Scriptures for the Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C](#)

## **Break open the word with your family**

### **Kids**

Paul tells us to try to learn, "righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness." Which of these virtues do you already have? Which ones would you like to get better at?

### **Teens**

The Gospel story gives us kind of a glimpse of the afterlife. What is your impression of it based on the story Jesus tells? What does it say about who do or do not get into heaven? The rich man is in "torment"—he can see heaven but can't have any of the comfort, it's really hot, and he still thinks he's better than Lazarus. What does this tell us about the

qualities of hell and anyone who might be there?

## **Adults**

There are many things that might make us complacent—excessive comfort and security, a constant barrage of sadness and bad news, fear that paralyzes us into believing that we can't change anything anyway, fatigue...the list could go on. Besides acute selfishness, the rich man in the Gospel might also have suffered from desensitization from seeing poverty every day. To what, or whom, have you become desensitized so that you no longer see them? What causes you to be complacent? What can you do to change it?

## **A little lectio**

The ancient practice of prayerfully reflecting on bits of Scripture is known as *lectio divina*. Want to try it out with your family? Head over to a [Lectio divina for kids](#) to find out how to adapt this prayer practice for your kids.

## **A little Bible study**

Want to do a little Bible study with your kids? Here are some tips:

- During Ordinary Time, the Church pairs the Old Testament and New Testament readings in a way that each sheds light on the other. Ask your kids to look for the common theme connecting the two readings. (Sometimes it's obvious, sometimes it is subtle.) How does the "dialogue" between the readings help you understand them better?
- Get a New American Bible, Revised Edition, and take a

look at the footnotes for these readings. How do they change your understanding of what is going on?

- Take a look at the context for the readings—what happens before, or after?
- Read the NABRE's introduction to the book of the Bible that the readings are taken from. How does that help you understand the readings?
- If you don't have a copy of the NABRE at home, you can view it online at the USCCB website at the [Daily Readings](#) web page.

For even more resources for breaking open this Sunday's readings, head over to [The Sunday Website](#).