

# ALL SAINTS

## CATHOLIC CHURCH & SCHOOL



*Love God • Serve Others • Form Disciples*

**September 27 & September 28, 2025;  
26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

## *Father Eric's Homily*

### ***The Sin of Doing Nothing***

**(Amos 6:1a, 4-7; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; Luke 16:19-31)**

There is an ethical principle called non-maleficence. It emphasizes the obligation not to inflict harm, injury or evil intentionally to others; it is a duty to do no harm. There is another ethical principle called beneficence. It is an obligation to act in ways that benefit others and promote their well-being; it is the duty to do good. As Christians, we are mandated to observe not only the principle of non-maleficence but also to observe the principle of beneficence. In other words, we are supposed not only to refrain from causing harm to others, but we are also supposed to help them and promote their good. Failure to help those in need if it within our power and means to do so, amounts to sin. We find an example in today's Gospel reading.

The Gospel presents us with two main characters, a rich man and a poor man, and two scenes, this world and the world after. The rich man is often called Dives (Latin word for rich), and the poor man is called Lazarus, which means "God is my help". It is only in this parable that Jesus gives a name to a character, Lazarus. The rich man dressed in purple garments and fine linen. He also dined sumptuously each day. Contrary to the lifestyle of the rich man, Lazarus was poor and was covered with sores. He was so helpless that dogs even used to lick his sores. He laid at the door of the rich man and would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. These were the conditions of the rich man and Lazarus in the world; sharp contrast. Their conditions changed when both died. Lazarus was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham while the rich man when he was buried experienced torment in the netherworld. In the afterlife, the rich man found himself in torment and Lazarus found himself in glory. The questions we must ask ourselves here are, why did the rich man find himself in torment? What sin did he commit? We are not told that he did something evil. He did not intentionally cause any injury or harm to Lazarus. The sin of the rich man was that he did nothing to help Lazarus. He could have changed the condition of Lazarus but he did nothing about it. He could have fed Lazarus and made sure that his wounds were nursed but he did not notice his plight. He thought that it was okay for Lazarus to wallow in pain and hunger while he enjoyed a life of luxury. So, it was not what the rich man did that led him into torment, but what he did not do that led him there. His sin was therefore a sin of omission.

There is a sin of commission when we do that which God prohibits us to do, and we commit sin of omission

when we fail to do what God commands us to do. James 4:17 states: “Everyone who knows what is right thing to do and does not do it commits a sin”.

In 1993, a South African photojournalist, Kevin Carter, took a photograph of a starving child and a vulture in Sudan during the famine in Sudan. It is a photograph of a frail famine-stricken boy, erroneously believed to be a girl until 2011, who had collapsed in the foreground with a hooded vulture eyeing him from nearby. The child was reported to be attempting to reach a United Nations feeding center about a half mile away in Ayod, Sudan (now South Sudan), in March 1993. The scene is one of utter despair as the vulture waits for the child to die. The image, titled “The Vulture and the Little Girl” first appeared in the New York Times on March 26, 1993, and won the photographer the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography in 1994. The photographer said he chased the vulture away 20 minutes after taking the shot. He was later reported to have said that the child recovered to continue her walk. The image created a sensation and sparked an international debate on journalistic ethics. Many critics questioned why Carter did not help the child instead of taking the picture for his personal gain. Some critics even indicated that there were two vultures on the scene, the vulture seen in the picture and the one with the camera. For some the real vulture was the Carter himself. (It was said that the photojournalists were instructed not to touch famine victims). Later Cater expressed regret for not helping the child. Four months after winning the prize he committed suicide. In his suicide note, he stated that he was haunted by the vivid memories of killings, corpses, anger and pain. At the heart of the criticism against Cater is the striking truth that we ought to help those in need; those who suffer; those who are helpless.

When the rich man told Abraham to send Lazarus to go and warn his five brothers so that they don't find themselves in a place of torment, Abraham told him that they had Moses and the prophets whom they should listen to and that if they don't listen to them, they would not listen to someone who rises from the dead. The truth is that we already have everything we need to help us do good and be saved. We have the word of God that speaks to us and guides us; we have our conscience to guide us; and we have men of God who continually call our attention to what God requires of us.

As Christians we must be intentional. To this end, St. Paul in today's second reading calls on us to pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. We must note that it is not enough to refrain from harming others, we must do good and help others.

