

Homily: 26th Sunday: Cycle C: 2016: Am 6: 1, 4-7; Ps 146; 1Tm 6: 11-16; Lk 16: 19-31
“The Spiritual Wake-up Call”

1. **This is a frightening Gospel!** If this Gospel passage doesn't wake us up to the reality of Heaven and Hell, I don't know what will! We live in an age that doesn't like to think that Hell is real, but Jesus tells us over and over again that it is and we need to be on guard not to go there! **His message today is:** *our moral and spiritual choices in life either open us up to God and draw us closer to Him, our fellow man, and eternal salvation; or conversely they dull us to Him and others to the point that even if we experienced someone who came back to life from the dead, i.e., Jesus's Resurrection as proclaimed by the Catholic Church for 21 centuries, we wouldn't repent or change our lives!* Very frightening indeed!
2. **God has warned us about the reality of Hell in different ways.** There are six main ways (see the book **Hell** by Fr. F.X. Schouppe, S.J., TAN books, pp 123-26). **First** through our unaided reason - we know deep down our moral choices have consequences, the human notion, even of the unreligious but thoughtful: *that you are going to pay for your sins*. This is because God has made us in His image and likeness with a powerful mind that comprehends good and evil. **Secondly** He has given us the Sacred Scriptures, i.e., “Moses and the prophets”, to warn us about the meaning and value of life and the rewards and punishments that are to follow after death. **Thirdly** He has given us His eternal Son Jesus to teach us, suffer and die to redeem us and reveal to us the true price of sin, and rise from the dead Himself to show us tangibly that human life is not ended at death, but we do indeed have an eternal destiny! **Fourthly** He has given us the Catholic Church, spread throughout the entire world, to teach all the nations about the truth of the Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell. **Fifthly** He has given us saints and holy people down through the ages to warn us of the reality of Heaven and Hell, through their writings and mystical visions, e.g., see the apparition of our Lady to the saintly visionaries of Fatima, Portugal in 1917 in which she showed them the reality of Hell, and told them that more souls go to Hell for sins against the 6th commandment (i.e., *sexual sins- because that area is so sacred to God as it*

is involved in bringing new human life, with immortal souls into the world) than for any other reason. A sobering thought! Come to 1st Saturday Mass in October. Finally the **sixth** way God has shown us the reality of Hell is at various times in history, He has allowed certain apparitions of damned souls (e.g. to St. Catherine of Siena), or has manifested the reality of Hell to individual people through near death experiences (10-15% reported back “Hellish” experiences of the afterlife: not foolproof: sample size and also individual remembrance distortions possible—the truth mixed in with own subjective perceptions which may or may not be true—but powerful nonetheless). By the way, 2, 3 and 4 are objective ways of showing the reality of Hell; 1, 5 and 6 are powerful subjective perceptions of the reality of Hell. Our faith in the reality of Hell is based on 2, 3, and 4; 1, 5 and 6 are supplements to that reality - see Fr. Benedict Groeschel’s book on private revelations: *A Still Small Voice* to put all this in proper perspective.

3. **All this is given to us as a warning by the Lord who truly loves us beyond our imagining.** This is so we do not get complacent in our spiritual life and to realize that our choices now have eternal consequences. God doesn’t want anyone to end up in Hell; if we end up there, it is our own fault: we freely chose to go there. **The reality of Hell should not frighten us in a paralyzing way, but rather wake us up to the need for ongoing conversion in our lives.** The Church teaches that you don’t accidentally end up in Hell - it is the result of deliberate choices, i.e., mortal sins that are unrepented (see the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, paragraph 1033). To commit a **mortal sin** we must meet three conditions, if any of these are missing it is NOT a mortal sin: 1. *it is objectively serious matter as defined by the 10 commandments and the teaching of the Church.* 2. *We know that it is a serious matter (God expects us to learn the difference between mortal and venial sins-ignorance in this regard is NOT bliss (contrary to what some ppl think) for only the Truth of God will set us free! - morally and spiritually).* 3. *We freely choose to do it anyway.* **YOU CANNOT FALL INTO MORTAL SIN BY ACCIDENT!** A consoling thought: the saints tell us that if we are persons of prayer in daily life that God will give us a warning in our conscience when we are treading on thin

moral ice, but if we ignore His voice, over time it will become more and more faint. Notice the rich man today didn't kill anyone, but he is in Hell! Murder is not the only mortal sin - all of the 10 Commandments can be violated in a serious way, as well as the definitive teachings of the Catholic Church on faith and morals as made known to us through the Magisterium and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, as well as the great commandment of Charity - to love God with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. The rich man today violated the commandment of charity in a serious way by failing to meet the basic needs of Lazarus, and hence he is in Hell because of his willful negligence of the people around him. It's so easy to do this today in contemporary America, which is frightening similar to what Amos says about the Israel of his time in the first reading today - complacency and wanton luxury and revelry abound (please read the book ***Happy are You Poor*** by Fr. Thomas Dubay, Ignatius Press, for a great reflection on our own tendency toward spiritual blindness, in this regard, as Christians living in a particularly materialistic age, and the call to radical conversion by the Lord Jesus: to live a life of radical simplicity personally and of great generosity toward others). This is why it is so important to live **the Corporeal and Spiritual works of Mercy** in our daily lives, as has been laid out during this Jubilee Year of Divine Mercy. Remember at **the Last Judgment** we will be judged based on what we did for the least of our brethren. NEVER FORGET THAT! God bless you.

Recommended Reading:

The Catechism of the Catholic Church: see especially paragraphs 1033-37. 1994.

Hell. Fr. F.X. Schouppe, S.J. TAN books. 1989.

Hell and Other Destinations: A Novelist's Reflections on This World and the Next. Piers Paul Read. Ignatius Press. 2006.

Life Everlasting: A Theological Treatise on the Last Four Things- Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell. Fr. Reginald Garrigou- LaGrange. TAN books. 1991.

My Visit to Hell. Paul Thigpen. Creation House. 2007

The Great Divorce. C.S. Lewis.

What will Hell be Like? St. Alphonsus Liguori. Ed. J. Schaefer. TAN books. 1988.