

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY; PBS EUCHARIST.

There is reported to exist in one of the top universities in Britain an elite dining club purely for elected, privileged men. The criterion for election depends on connections and wealth. If elected, the selectee has a specially made tailcoat that costs around three and a half thousand pounds. But to fulfil the conditions of election there is first an initiation ceremony. The candidate has to find a down and out, a beggar, a person of the street and burn a fifty pound note in front of them. It is supposed to celebrate a potential member's ostentatious wealth and contempt for the poor.

This is an extreme retelling of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, but it is not just a parable it is happening today in 21st century Britain. It is a gross display of the darkness of the human heart when it treats the neighbour as an inconvenient object, a thing to be ridiculed and mocked. We quite naturally balk at such actions and anybody who is not completely dead inside rages against such inhuman activity. Our natures though are frail, and can deceive us into thinking that while we wouldn't do anything so hurtful; we fail to take further steps to do anything pro-active either.

The Church of God has a particular role to play in assisting the poor. It is true what Jesus said, that we will always have the poor with us, but it is also true that we carry within us the means of doing something about it because what our nature lacks we have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to make up the deficiencies. The saintly Bishop Edward King had a favourite saying; it was the task of every son and daughter of God "to bring home to the people and especially to the poor the blessings of the Church". We have treasures that need to be lavished on the poor, for the poor man or woman on the street is Christ whom we are required to feed and clothe and visit. For who wouldn't want to give to Christ everything that one possesses without reservation of any kind?

Too many Christians hold onto this particular aspect of our calling, the care of the poor, and maybe even other important teachings of the Christian faith with the tips of our fingers instead of embracing them with the fullness of our heart. And our work, our discipline to be conformed into the likeness of Christ will not end until we see fully in our neighbour the full presence of God.

The members of the elite club wear expensive tailcoats and they might as well be made of purple, and those fifty pound notes won't be the only things that are burning if there isn't true repentance and proper reparation for such appalling sins. For our part let us ask God that in all ways we will please Him in will and deed, and see His face in all those who lack the very basics of life.

AMEN