

## 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

What's the opposite of love? Before you answer in your mind—the answer I am looking for **is not hate**. The opposite of love is **indifference**. Indifference is a total lack of interest or sympathy. It's the attitude that says:

- “I don't know, and I don't care.”
- Or even: “If it's not my family, not my problem.”

Jesus' parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus puts this indifference under a spotlight. The rich man isn't condemned because he's rich, or wealthy or privileged — he is condemned because he **doesn't even see Lazarus** at his gate. He walks past him day after day. He steps over him. Only when it is too late does he finally notice him — and even then, his concern is still self-centered:

“Send Lazarus to warn my brothers!”

Even in eternity, he never truly loves Lazarus — he just wants him to serve his needs. And so, the question is not, “What did the rich man do?” The question is, “What did he fail to do?”

**He failed to love. He failed to see.**

Jesus gives us the great commandment:

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind ... and love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22:38-39)*

- When do we know we have missed the mark?

- When we have stopped loving —
- when we become numb and indifferent toward others.

Our world is full of this indifference.

And while we might be the first to blame social media and the 24/7 news cycle for this – and no doubt social media has its effect – polarizing us, demonizing people who think differently, reducing real people to “issues” that we argue or debate. **We allow the social media**, the algorithms, the new cycles into our lives, and it is also within our control to work towards stopping or turning away from these things and allowing the Gospel to guide us instead. Facebook...and Instagram...and TikTok or Snapchat might bring us some enjoyment, and certainly are addictive...but are they worth it when it comes to negative shaping of who we are or who we are becoming?

This past week, I sat with our local high school principals and chaplains (at DOC and Notre Dame)— something we now do monthly as part of building a stronger relationship between parish and school. And I asked them about fighting and bullying at the schools, and they told me something that has stuck with me: the number of fights among students hasn’t necessarily increased, but the **number of videos of them have** – posted on social media, so the number of spectators have increased too. Cyber-bullying and the “spectator culture” have grown and students stand back, film, post online — but few step in to help.

In other words, **indifference is on the rise, even among our young people.** But it's not just at school, my friends. Ask yourself:

- Do you know someone who is cheating on a spouse – and haven't said anything?
- Have you heard someone make a racial or bigoted slur – and laughed or said nothing about it?
- Have you witnessed someone being mistreated or disregarded at work or elsewhere and said nothing?
- Do you know people who make sexist remarks or disparage others – and again ignore it but say nothing

In any of these scenarios or others we might think of – have we ever said, “it's not my problem” or blamed our indifference or failure to act on the “lawsuit” culture we live in – thinking we will be charged or sued or something? Do we care for everyone, **absolutely everyone**, no matter who they are, what they believe or what we think of them personally?

Next Sunday many of us will gather for **Life Chain** in front of St. Bernadette's —a beautiful witness to the dignity of life. But do we care for the unborn, *and for seniors, for the poor, and for the lonely, and for the bullied and for the abused — for everyone* — or just some of the above? Our pro-life witness must always be consistent —it must include every life, at every stage, in every situation. Until it does, we have work to do — all of us do, **myself included**.

Around election time, the political candidate hopefuls reach out to pastors, looking for support and a pulpit – which we don't give them but when I met with a few of them, I asked “what are you going to do about the increased homelessness on the streets in Ajax” and while we do have many in our parish doing something – thank you for that – several of our groups and a few who still travel downtown Toronto for Street Patrol but it's hard to get momentum going with new ministry – and considering today's Gospel, I shamefully admit I know I should have pushed harder. My bringing this up with politicians and then criticizing them when they do nothing is a form of indifference too. As the pastor here, when someone comes to me with a “you should” or a “we should” and then tells me they are too busy – I make it clear that telling others what they should be doing is not our calling as disciples.

So friends, I ask you to think of this a little this week. We have a vibrant parish with many ministries, but maybe we need something organized to serve the homeless on the streets of Ajax – and we have the support of our high schools if we do. If this is something the Lord might be calling you to do, reach out to me – send me an email.

This year we are starting a small pilot program for our candidates for Confirmation where they will have less classroom catechesis, more home-study and instead will be given a short-list of service ministries by me to participate in

and some of our Confirmandi will be invited to be part of this pilot.

One of the things we are going to continue to invest in here as a parish is our visiting ministry – visiting people who are lonely, shut-in, unable to be a part of our community here like you are. This is a simple, powerful way to love our neighbour – visiting those who are homebound, in nursing homes, or isolated and lonely. Sometimes what people need most is not money, not advice — but a listening ear, a caring heart, someone who will not ignore them. Perhaps God is calling some of you to be that presence. If you have felt the Lord stirring your heart today or throughout this week ahead, consider getting involved in ministries that help and care for others. It could be one of the most meaningful ways you share Christ's love.

My friends, the opposite of love is indifference. Let us not be indifferent. Let us see Lazarus **at our gate**. Let us see Christ in the poor, the suffering, the lonely, those who are hurting and those who our fast paced world seems to cast aside. Let us act — so that when we meet the Lord face-to-face, He will say to us: “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master.”