Homily Outline for Catholic Answers Mass
Hyatt Regency La Jolla Hotel at Aventine
Regency Ballroom
San Diego, California

Twenty-Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time - Cycle C
September 25, 2022

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I. The rich man from his agony in hell pleads with Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his father and six brothers, "lest they too come to this place of torment."

   A. Abraham replies that they have Moses and the prophets.

   B. The rich man argues that "if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent."

   C. Abraham replies, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead."

       1. Indeed, Christ has risen from the dead, yet many are not persuaded that they should change their lives.

       2. We call this complacency.

II. Spiritual complacency stems from either procrastination or presumption.

   A. Procrastination is the tendency to put something off.

       1. This may especially be a temptation for the young: "I don't have to worry about eternal life yet; I'm young and have a lot of years ahead of me before I have to worry about death."

2. But Jesus tells us to be prepared "for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13).

3. Presumption is when you presume that you are going to heaven, so you do not have to worry about it.

4. Related to this is the notion of universal salvation, i.e., everyone if going to heaven.

B. In the Creed, we profess our belief in the resurrection of the dead.

1. Jesus taught that "all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28-29).

2. Contrary to what the Church has taught through most of her history, in recent years some theologians and Christian denominations, such as the Unitarians and Universalists, have suggested that no one is in hell, but everyone will go to heaven. This is called universal salvation.

3. Our Lord's reference to "the resurrection of condemnation" indicates rather clearly that not everyone will go to "the resurrection of life," but only "those who have done good deeds."

4. Jesus also states elsewhere in the Bible, "But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish" (Luke 13:3).

5. One of the disciples followed up on that statement by asking Jesus, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?"

6. He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough" (Luke 13:23-24). "How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few" (Matthew 7:14).

C. We must also be aware of the consequences for evangelization if it is commonly accepted that everyone will go to heaven regardless of how sinful they have been and without ever repenting of their sins.

    1. If I am going to heaven no matter how much evil I do in this life and I never repent of those sins, why bother going to church? Why follow the Ten Commandments? Why should I love my neighbor?

    2. Actually, the Catholic Church teaches that it is a sin against the First Commandment to believe that you will go to heaven no matter what you do in this life; that is called the sin of presumption, because the sinner presumes God's mercy without repenting and asking for forgiveness.

    3. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n. 2092), "There are two kinds of presumption. Either man presumes upon his own capacities, (hoping to be able to save himself without help from on high), or he presumes upon God's almighty power or his mercy (hoping to obtain his forgiveness without conversion and glory without merit)."

III. The antidote to complacency is diligence, which come from the Latin word *diligo*, which means to love, not in the romantic sense of love (*amare*), but in the sense of devoted love to God and neighbor.

A. To shake off our complacency and increase our thirst to live forever with God in heaven, it is good for us to reflect on the question: what will heaven be like?

B. The answer to that question is suggested in a movie I once saw, entitled, "I Can Only Imagine."

    1. The movie tells the story of Bart Millard and the Christian band known as MercyMe.

    2. Growing up in Greenville, Texas, Bart suffered at the hands of his abusive father, Arthur.

3. His problems were made worse when his mother ran away from her apparently violent husband and left Bart with his abusive father.

4. Years later, Bart's father became a Christian after he was diagnosed with cancer. After Arthur's death, Bart discovered his Dad's journal in which he wrote his reflections about heaven. On each page, Arthur wrote, "I can only imagine." This inspired Bart to write a song by that name.

5. It became the best-selling Christian song of all time.

I can only imagine what it will be like
When I walk by your side
I can only imagine what my eyes will see
When your face is before me
I can only imagine

Surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel
Will I dance for you, Jesus, or in awe of you be still
Will I stand in your presence or to my knees will I fall
Will I sing Hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all
I can only imagine, I can only imagine

I can only imagine when that day comes
And I find myself standing in the sun
I can only imagine when all I will do
Is forever, forever worship you
I can only imagine, yeah, I can only imagine

Surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel
Will I dance for you, Jesus, or in awe of you be still
Will I stand in your presence or to my knees will I fall
Will I sing Hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all
I can only imagine, yes, I can only imagine[1]

IV.   Since our goal is to become saints, just imagine how awesome it would be to live forever with God in heaven!

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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[1] Songwriter: Bart Marshall Millard, © ESSENTIAL MUSIC PUBLISHING, For non-commercial use only.