

Turn to Holy Spirit for help to prepare for Christmas

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One hundred years ago, my great-grandfather arrived in Chicago, not for a holiday, but because of the harsh poverty in his home country of Slovakia. He came here with the hope of making and saving some money, and then deciding whether he would remain here or return.

Many of your great-grandfathers were in the same situation, with one difference: my great-grandfather was only here about seven years and yours remained here. I feel this bond of closeness to you because of this common history.

Yet our great-grandfathers' urgent need to resolve the situation of poverty for each of their families is completely different from the Parable of the Rich Fool (Lk 12:16-21). This man was so rich he tore down his barns to make larger ones for the abundant crops his field produced.

What is God's reaction to this rich man's activities? He calls him a fool. It is very rare in the Bible for God to call someone that name, and yet, God deemed the rich man to be foolish. He tells him, "You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?" (Lk 12:20).

In a sense, he is telling the rich man: "Are you sure that all that you have will be of profit to you tomorrow? Because tonight your soul will be asked of you." When the rich man comes before God, he will be asked how he used his material goods — these goods, which he received from God. We read at the end of this passage the wisdom of Jesus Christ: We must be rich before God, not in the eyes of this world (cf. v. 21). Jesus says it is better to be rich in the eyes of God.

This is a fitting Gospel for us during the season of the Philipovka, the Philip's Fast, in preparation for Christmas. It is a time of preparation for Jesus Christ's arrival in the world. We know how he arrived — in poverty. His place of birth was without dignity, in a cave used as a manger. None of us were born in a manger with cows and horses, yet Jesus Christ was born in this circumstance.

How many people in this world suffer from hunger? How many people suffer from thirst, without sufficient water? Thanks be to God, we live in the United States, and God blesses us with the gift of always having something to eat and to drink.

This parable today is offered to us to reflect on our own lives: What is my responsibility? How do I use the goods I have received? Maybe you worked hard for these goods, and life was not easy for you. But now, here in the church, Jesus Christ asks us: How do we use the goods we received? And by this, he does not mean only material goods, but also intellectual goods, our knowledge, education, and so on.

We must ask ourselves how do we use these goods for one another? How do we use these goods that we have received for our brothers and sisters?

We should ask Jesus for his Holy Spirit, to show us in this time of preparation for Christmas what it means for Jesus Christ to be born in our hearts.

When will Jesus Christ be born in our hearts? When will love be born in our hearts for one another? When in our hearts will the love of God be born?

One day, we all will be before the Pantocrator, and we will be asked to account for the same things that were asked of the rich man. In preparation for that day, during this Philip's Fast, let us ask that the riches of God's love be built up in our hearts, the only barn worth renovating and filling.

*This text includes excerpts from Bishop Lach's homily during Divine Liturgy Nov. 19 at St. Mary Parish in Whiting, Indiana.*

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