

SEPTEMBER 28 2025 FATHER GUSTAVE INEZ

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today's Gospel tells us the story of the rich man, whose name is not given, clothed in fine linen and purple. And poor Lazarus, his name is given, who lay at his gate, at the gate of the rich man, covered in sores.

The contrast is painful—one who feasts daily in luxury and one who longs for crumbs. Jesus does not condemn the rich man for being wealthy, but for being indifferent. He stepped over Lazarus daily, yet never once opened his heart or hand. His sin was blindness, blindness to the suffering that God had placed right at his door.

This parable reminds us of a truth that runs through the whole of scripture. God identifies with the poor, the weak, the stranger, the migrant, the refugee. “Whatever you did to the least of these, my brothers and sisters, you did to me.” The rich man failed to see Lazarus as a brother, and so he failed to see God.

Pope Francis, in his audience last year in August, reminded us that migrants today are our Lazarus. They flee war, persecution, climate disaster, and poverty, and they arrive at the gates of our nation and of our churches. They are not numbers, but names, each one bearing the dignity of being a child of God.

The Holy Father insisted, while governments have the task of managing borders and policies, we, as the church, have the mission to protect, to welcome, and accompany the migrant. This

is not optional. This is the Gospel. And Pope Francis added that not doing that is a grave sin. He basically was telling us that, among all the many grave sins you may have learned in your catechetical classes, this is now one of them.

In fact, our Catholic faith compels us to be the first defenders of human dignity, especially when politics is dominated by fear and hostility. When we hear rhetoric that blames migrants for economic hardships, crime, or cultural loss, we must resist. For behind every face is Christ himself, waiting at the gate.

The measure of our discipleship is now not how safe or prosperous we feel, but how much we love those whom society ignores. Think again of Lazarus. He had nothing but his name, and Lazarus means “God helps.” God did help him, but not through the rich man. Instead, God received him into the bosom of Abraham.

And the lesson is clear: if we do not recognize Christ in the poor now, we risk being the ones who cry out too late, like the rich man in Hades.

Today, our world is marked by immense inequality. Many of our comfort, our clothes, our electronics, even our food, come at the expense of exploited labourers, often in poor nations. The Lazarus at our gate is not only across the street, but also across oceans. Migrants come to us as living reminders that our faith must break through borders of indifference.

Brothers and sisters, the Gospel and Pope Francis call us to conversion: to see, to welcome, to defend. Let us make our parishes true homes, where migrants find friendship, not suspicion, dignity, not rejection. Let us never confuse the work of government—controlling borders—with the work of the Gospel—opening hearts.

For it is not nations that we judge as in the end, but the Lord himself, who will ask, “When I was a stranger, did you welcome me?” And I really do not like to use the verb “to judge.” But here, it seems to be central to Jesus’ message when we ignore those who suffer.

So today, let us pray for the grace to recognize Christ in the migrant, the refugee, the poor, and the forgotten. Let us ask for courage to stand with them, not in theory, but in practice. And let us remember always, the gates of heaven are wider than the gates of any city, but they open only to those who, like Abraham, embrace the stranger as a brother or sister. Amen.