

I am delighted to report that there are no ivory beds in the house I'm living in, and that I do not have a harp to bawl to. My host is so busy being a priest that there is seldom a bottle of wine, and like the Lord and his disciples, we are so busy that there is no time even to eat. I am not used to this way of life, always thinking that we must leave some of the work of salvation to Jesus.

I've come back today to celebrate the Holy Mysteries with you, and with you to listen to the good news. Although we are parting as priest and people, we are always at one with each other in the Mass. And I do pray for you every day in the Mass where I am celebrating it, and I know, because you've told me, that you remember me. In this way we turn what is a painful part of our lives into a cause for holiness, for faith, hope, and love. This is the work of redemption, this makes us the Church of Christ.

There is a separation in the Gospel today, and it is a terrible one. Lazarus is suffering; and there is no-one to care for him or share his sorrow. The rich man is rejoicing within his walls; but he has no-one to share his good fortune. This separation, this blindness to justice, is the painful separation, the one which destroys, the one in which souls can be lost.

When the chips are down, and the pair of them die, the separation which emerged on earth is continued in the life of eternity. Now Lazarus is being comforted, while the rich man has gone into eternal torment.

As I wrote in the Bulletin this week, we shouldn't back-burner this story, disastrously relegating it to the fanciful realms of the future. We must listen to it now, and it must change us now. The separation is between us and the fact of suffering, the fact of death. The rich man would not look on Lazarus, because he spoke to him of his own mortality, and the rich man didn't want to spoil his good life by thinking of that. What blindness to God's providence, who makes our life and our death into one thing, a single journey with a single meaning! If we became lodged in some coign of this world, some little niche where we thought to find our whole happiness and all our meaning, how sad are we! We can only do that by self-deception, that separates us from the truth. That is why in every life there are partings and departures, change and transformations, experiences of loss. If God has been good to us, we shall often find our garden wall demolished, and the experience of poverty coming our way.

That is not a bad way of looking at what I've experienced in the last few weeks. The loss of a way of life, and of my parish, has been a hard one. It had actually happened before, when (four years ago) I left leafy Wollaton to inherit the House in which I have lived in Lincoln. (It is a horrible house, and I rely on you get rid of it!) But the poverty makes me a sharer with so many others whose life and security is taken from them daily. These are the people I have most met and tried to help in hospitals and homes and schools and University. Because the moment is a holy moment, when we can actually have the immense privilege of feeling close to Christ. It can also be a fearful moment, in which we come close to losing him. That is what this awful gulf is about, that threatens to separate us from each other, from our humanity, and from the love of God.

It is in the oneness of the Eucharist that I have sought and found safety all my life. This deeply compassionate journey into the heart of our humanity shares the Cross out for all of us. I have tried to share this truth with you for a little while, and I ask you to stay faithful to it in the future; so that whatever God may ask of us, we shall not refuse to say, *thy will be done*.