

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

[Con Foley](#)

### Lectionary 138:

Amos 6:1a, 4-7

Ps 146:7, 8-9, 9-10

1 Tim 6:11-16

Lukk 16:19-31

### **Possible preaching themes:**

The need for awareness, paying attention, and noticing. What grabs our attention and commitments? What distracts us from Christian calling? How the Scriptures, the Tradition of the church, our church community and people of good will can help us to notice what is important. Are we more dependent on each other than we think?

### **Possible scientific resources:**

- **Inattentional blindness:** [www.simplypsychology.org/inattentional-blindness.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/inattentional-blindness.html), and <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/but-did-you-see-the-go-rilla-the-problem-with-inattentional-blindness-17339778/>

**Summary of Articles:** Inattentional blindness is a psychological way of describing the phenomenon of a person failing to notice something that is completely visible because of a lack of attention. Research indicates that the lack of awareness is likely to stem from “an abundance of visual stimuli” which capture a person’s attention and divert it from noticing something which is obvious and more important. The consequences of inattentional blindness can be tragic, sometimes leading to automobile collisions and all sorts of fatal accidents.

- **Discovery and Development of Penicillin:** <http://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/education/whatischemistry/landmarks/flemingpenicillin.html>, and <https://www.healio.com/news/endocrinology/20120325/penicillin-an-accidental-discovery-changed-the-course-of-medicine>

**Summary of Articles:** In 1928 Alexander Fleming noticed something that was to change the course of medicine. He noticed that in an almost discarded petri dish, bacteria that he had grown was being killed by an invading fungus. Fleming named the

active agent from the fungus penicillin. This was the first effective antibiotic against various bacteria, and led to cures for numerous, previously fatal, illnesses.

This second resource of noticing and discovery could be juxtaposed with the Inattentional blindness of the rich man in the gospel. The outline below will be linked to the first resource.

### Homily outline:

- **First reading:** Amos could see through the illusions and abuses of the powerful. He wrote about 750 BCE. He did not come from a line of professional prophets – he had been “a dresser of sycamores.” His gift with words exposes the priorities of the powerful and their lack of attention for the vulnerable: “Those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge upon their couches; Who drink wine from bowls...and anoint themselves with the best oils but are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph.”
  - Amos challenges those ensconced in luxury, and indifferent to the suffering of the people. Privilege, and the focus on self, can conceal us from our responsibilities towards others.
- **Gospel:** In all the parables of Jesus only one person is given a name. That person is named in today’s gospel. It is a person who had been totally neglected – Lazarus. A name which means “God is my help.” The name reveals the compassion of God. The message is that God notices, cares, and acts out of love.
  - The Gospel reminds us that God has the last and definitive word over rich and poor. We have plenty of guidance on what God expects of us. We have the prophets like Amos, the scriptures, the social teaching of the church, the preaching and example of Christ (the one who came back from the dead) and the witness of the saints. This should focus our attention and inform our priorities.
  - Our faith compels us to be committed to working for justice, and against poverty. Poverty in broadest sense –the lonely, the sick, bereaved, those trapped in addiction or anxiety, those unable to forgive.
  - There is a link between Inattentional blindness and sin. The rich man in the parable is not accused of gaining his wealth by unjust means. His sin is the sin of omission: he failed to “see the gorilla.” Self-centeredness leads to indifference towards others, an incapacity to see and feel their suffering. The rich man’s sin was not that he was rich, but that he was not aware enough to share. We all have our personal and communal blind spots; listening and reflection can help us be

more aware of the suffering of others.

- Our gifts are not for hoarding or self-indulgence. The name of Abraham is mentioned, a reminder that we have a covenant responsibility to each other. God's covenant is with an entire people which is one family. (2 Sam 7:8-17). Pope Francis: "I ask all people of goodwill to help build a culture of encounter, solidarity and peace." <https://twitter.com/pontifex/status/531461271984435200>
- We are given vision and take our direction from God, and this helps us to act out of love. Love is sensitive, attentive, proactive, generous and relieves suffering. Love helps us to notice and to act. We all have something we can share – to use our time and resources with an eye to the eternal (Matt 25:31-46). We have the gift of speech to offer a kind word, and the gift of compassion, because someone somewhere is hurting.
- Be aware of the Lazarus' in our own communities...they may need our help in this life, and we may need their help in the next.
- For an uplifting story that links with this theme of growing in awareness, see the Story of John Newton, the author of the hymn *Amazing Grace*. "I once was blind but now I see." [Amazing Grace - Wikipedia](#)

**Tags:** awareness, blindness, love, omission, parable, penicillin, prophetic

### **About the Preaching with the Sciences Initiative**

A primary way Roman Catholics explore their faith and nourish their spirituality is by participating in Sunday Mass and actively engaging in the homily. However, few preachers explicitly connect faith or spirituality with science. The Preaching with the Sciences initiative, made possible by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation, gathers scientists and leading homileticians to explore the positive contributions science can make to preaching, and consequently contribute to more contemporary modes of believing. Such contributions are grounded in the rich imaginations that scientists bring to their work as well as in scientific discoveries that have a potential for revealing religious truths and even shedding new insight on ancient teachings and beliefs.

With guidance from world-renowned scientists with differing areas of expertise, a select number of homileticians will draft homily outlines for preaching key Sundays and feast days across the 3-year lectionary cycle. Over 100 homily outlines will highlight some of the way's sciences and the contemporary search for religious meaning can interface. These free homiletic resources have the potential to influence thousands of preachers seeking help each week in crafting sermons and helping to shape a scientifically informed religious imagination among future preachers.