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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Luke's gospel is a compilation of various interviews with eye-witnesses and close followers of Jesus (Luke 1:1-4). The author, Luke, probably did not become a Christian until several years after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is first mentioned (implicitly) in Acts 16:10 (Acts is another book of the New Testament which Luke wrote). He did not, therefore, meet Jesus in the flesh and he himself was not an eye-witness.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Continuation of Luke 16: 24-31

Ver. 24.—*And he cried*—“cried” because his great punishment evoked a great cry. S. Chrysostom.

And said, Father Abraham. He calls Abraham father, because he was a Jew, and therefore a descendant of Abraham. He did not address Lazarus, says Theophylact, because he was ashamed, and moreover thought that Lazarus was still mindful of the evils he had suffered at his hands.

Send Lazarus. “O miserable man,” says S. Chrysostom, “thou art mistaken. Abraham can receive him, he cannot send him! Behold the rich man has now need of the poor man. So when death draws nigh, and the spectacle of life is over, when the marks of riches and of poverty are laid aside, all are judged according to their works, according as they are possessed of true riches, or are poor in the sight of God.”

1. That God has appointed to each his lot, and has made some rich, some poor. Let each one therefore be content with that station which God has allotted him. Let the poor, by patient endurance of want, and the rich, by the liberal relief of the poor, seek for life and happiness in the world to come. For Christ seems to have spoken this parable to enforce His teaching, "Make to yourselves fiends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations." The rich man was not compassionate, and therefore he was rejected by Abraham and Lazarus.

2. That we must not despise the poor and afflicted, but on the contrary render all the assistance which lies in our power. For S. Gregory (*Hom.* 40) says, "The medicine of poverty heals those whom moral infirmity wounds, and often a pearl lies hidden in a dunghill, *i.e.* holiness and virtue often lie hid in an unclean body, and in abject poverty. And so S. Romula, dying of poverty and paralysis, was carried to heaven by a chorus of angels. He adds, "We find a Lazarus every day if we seek him, and even if we seek him not, we see him. Behold how importunately the poor present themselves, and make demands on us, in their turn to intercede on our behalf. We ought certainly to ask of them, yet they ask of us. Consider, whether we ought to refuse what is demanded of us when those who ask are our patrons."

3. That the rich ought not to boast themselves in their riches, for riches endure but for a time, and death deprives men of their all. Wherefore let them not set their hearts upon their riches, but on God; and let them for the love of God use that wherewith He has prospered them for the benefit of the needy and poor.

And again, by a sudden change—a change which is graphically described by the prophet (see Isaiah lxx. 13)—the rich man becomes the suppliant of the poor man, and he who was wont to pass by Lazarus as he lay nigh at hand, invokes his aid now that he is afar off.

That he may dip the tip of his finger in water, &c. His tongue, which was inflamed with the desires of gluttony and of boasting, says S. Chrysostom (and of gossiping, adds the Interlinear), now burns with the fires of hell, for wherein that a man sinneth, by the same also shall he be punished. Wisdom xi. 16.

For I am tormented, &c. by unspeakable torments, both by the flaming fire and a raging thirst.

Hear S. Chrysostom (*serm.* 124): "If thou art surrounded on all sides by the fires of hell, why dost thou desire only the cooling of thy tongue? Because, he answers, the tongue which insulted the poor man, and refused him relief, suffers the more in the fiery torment:" and Salvian adds (*Lib.* iii *ad. Eccles.*), "How willingly would the rich man have sacrificed all his possessions to obtain release from his endless misery?" Nay more, he would have given up everything for one hour's respite from the flames. Because, can we imagine that he who prayed that Lazarus might be sent so great a journey to bear but one drop of water, would have begrudged any price to purchase rest?

"Fitly," says S. Augustine (*serm.* 110 *De tempore*) "did he ask a drop of the man who asked of him a crumb, and inasmuch as he loved riches, he met with no compassion. Ever foolish, too late compassionate, he wished his brethren to be warned—but obtained nothing by his request." And again (*Serm.* 227), "Be warned by the example of the luxurious rich man, whose dogs Lazarus fed by his sores, though he was denied the crumbs which fell from that rich man's table. But after a short time their lots were changed. The poor man, because of his poverty, obtained happiness; the rich man, on account of his riches, punishment. The one is carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, the other consigned to the depths of hell. The whole body of the rich man is consumed by the fire, yet his tongue suffers still greater torment. Doubtlessly because by its proud speaking he had despised the poor man. For the tongue which is unwilling to order the relief of the poor, is subjected to greater suffering hereafter. O rich man, how canst thou ask for a drop of water, when thou wouldest not give a crumb from thy table? Hadst thou been willing to give, thou mightest now with justice make thy request." And again, "By a just judgment in thy turn thou sufferest, for judgment without mercy is the reward of the unmerciful."

And S. Gregory (*hom.* 40): He who was unwilling to give the suffering beggar the least crumb that fell from his table, in hell was feign to seek, if it were but the least drop of water." And S. Basil says, "The rich man is

worthily recompensed: for the tuneful lyre, wailing; for drink, the intense longing for a drop.”

You ask, How can the soul of the rich man be said to have a tongue, or the soul of Lazarus a finger; or how can the one feel thirst, and be tormented in the flames, or seek to be relieved by the finger of the other?

1. Tertullian erroneously thinks that the human soul is corporeal, and that it therefore has its tongue, finger, and other members.
2. Hugo Cætherianus supposes that the disembodied soul has the semblance of a body, like the reflection of any object in a mirror; and John Huartus, a physician, is of the same opinion.
- 3, But I hold that Christ was here speaking after the manner of a parable, and wished to place before the eyes of his hearers the punishments and rewards which men will receive at the day of judgment, because we only can form an opinion of the punishments of the soul through the punishments of the body; and further, he wished to show that the rich man was punished suitably to his sin.

Some add that the fires of hell produce in the souls of the damned torments, similar to those which they would suffer if they were still in the body. For why should it be thought impossible for God to cause the soul to suffer without the body what it would have suffered if it had continued to be united with the body? Especially as every feeling which affects the soul whilst it is in the body, is of the soul, and not of the body: for it is the soul and not the body which feels, and sees and hears. See 2 Cor. iv. 16. Hence Francis Lucas says, that we are to understand that the soul of the rich man suffered just as if his body had been actually given up to be tormented by the flames, for the soul is afflicted by imaginations derived from the body.

In short, all these things set forth, after the manner of a parable, the extreme misery and torment of the rich man; and also that the blessed are not able to render any aid to the damned, nor indeed have they the wish to do so, inasmuch as they are persuaded that this would be contrary to the fixed purpose of God. Furthermore, the damned do not dare to ask this aid, for they on their part know that they are separated by a great and impassable gulf from those who have entered into rest.

Hence Abraham feels no compassion for the misery of the rich man, because he recognises in his punishment the justice of God. For the sight of the punishment of the wicked does not lessen the happiness of the just, because since they can feel no compassion for the sufferings which they see, their joy will not on this account be diminished. Gloss. And S. Gregory (*hom.* 40) says, The souls of the just, although in the goodness of their nature they feel compassion, yet after they have been united to the righteousness of their Author, are constrained by such great uprightness as not to be moved with compassion towards the reprobate.

Ver. 25.—*But Abraham said, Son, remember, &c.* “See,” says S. Chrysostom, “the kindness of the Patriarch. He calls him son, yet he gives no aid to him, who had deprived himself of cure.” “For,” adds S. Gregory of Nyssa, “because he had no pity,

because he was the occasion and the cause of their evil lives.

Thus S. Gregory, Lyranus, and others, Cajetan adds, “Dives asked this out of the pride which fills the hearts of the damned, that if not in his own person, at least in the person of his brethren he might be blessed and exalted.”

Hence S. Ambrose says, “This rich man too late begins to be a master, for he had neither time for learning nor teaching.”

Ver. 29.—*Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets, i.e.* the writings of Moses and the Prophets, which the Scribes and Pharisees read and expound in their synagogues.

Ver. 30.—*And he said, Nay, Father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* He is speaking of his own experience. For as he had been affected, so does he think it will be with his brethren. S. Chrysostom. Titus more clearly writes, “Why does the rich man say this but because he himself had heard the prophets to little purpose, and had looked upon their teaching as untrue? Therefore he conjectures that his brethren similarly regarded them. He as much as says, ‘They argue as I once argued. Who has ever given any description of hell—who has ever returned thence? But if any one were sent to them from the dead, they would believe him, and give diligent heed to what he had to say.’”

Ver. 31.—*And he said unto him, &c.* They will say that Lazarus is a phantom, sent by the spirits of evil to deceive; whereas the writings of Moses and the prophets are inspired, are accepted by the Jews at the rule of faith, according to that which is written, “We have now a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.” 2 S. Peter 1. 19.

The truth of the Patriarch’s answer is proved by the conduct of the Jews, who spoke against the raising of the other Lazarus, and the resurrection of Christ Himself, and refused to believe in Him.

So also Peter, who three years after death was recalled to life by S. Stanislaus, Bishop of Cracow, to testify concerning some land which had been sold by the king, replied to those who asked him concerning the other world, no more than this, “Ye have Moses and the prophets. I have been sent to bear witness, not to preach.”

Dives therefore obtained none of his requests, because it is written, “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.” Prov. xxi. 13.

Morally, we learn from this parable or rather from this history,

knowledge of the Law. The dogs are the preachers, who by their teaching, as it were, touch with their tongue the wounds of the soul. Abraham's bosom, the secret rest, where the rich man sees Lazarus. For the unbelievers see the faithful abiding in rest above them but afar off, because they cannot attain thither by their merits, and they burn in their tongues because they held in their mouth the words of the Law, but kept them not."

And again, "Lazarus represents an apostolic man, poor in speech but rich in faith. The crumbs are the doctrines of the faith. The rich man, some heretic who abounds in eloquent discourses—for all such have a talkative tongue, but a foolish and profitless soul."

Ver. 27.—*Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him,* &c. Probably these words are spoken as the former ones, after the manner of a parable (see verse 24). For it is a very common occurrence in everyday life that those who have met with misfortunes wish to warn their brethren against incurring a similar fate. But of one thing worldly-minded men, who ridicule or else think lightly of the pains of hell, may be assured, no one has ever returned from thence to tell us what their sufferings are.

That thou wouldest send him. Lazarus again in the body, that he, being known to the brethren, and a witness to be seen of all, might move them to faith and penitence. We are taught therefore that the rich man after his death had need of the aid of him whom in his lifetime he had despised.

Touching the appearances of the spirits of the departed, see S. Augustine (*De cura pro mortuis*); Debrius (*in Magicis*); and Peter Thyraeus (*De apparitionibus spirituum*).

Ver. 28.—*That he may testify unto them* how grievously I am tormented for my sinful indulgence, and exhort them to repentance and amendment, *lest they also come into this place of torment.*

You will say that the damned are in utter despair, hating both God and man, cursing everything and every creature, and bearing good will to none—how then could Dives have wished that his brethren might escape the torments of hell? I answer—

1. The damned do not wish to cause anything good, *i.e.* any act of natural or supernatural virtue, nor have they the power to do so on account of their despair, and intense hatred of God and all good, but they are able to desire some natural good, for example, that it may be well with their parents or brethren. For this reason S. Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Theophylact, think that the rich man, influenced by the ties of kindred and by family affection, really was anxious for the welfare of his brethren, for nature remains the same even in the damned. The action of Dives therefore was one of nature and not of virtue, and had regard, not to actual good, but to natural good only, as the action of animals in nourishing their young.
2. The rich man was anxious for himself more than for his brethren, for he considered their evil his own, inasmuch as their condemnation would increase his torments,

he is not heard. Neither Abraham nor God has compassion on his prayer."

Remember that thou . . . receivedst thy good things. Thou, when thou wast faring sumptuously, wast unwilling to bestow a thought on Lazarus, or on God, or on heaven or hell; but now call to mind thy feastings, which have led to thy condemnation.

"For," says S. Gregory (*hom.* 40), "to increase his punishment, his knowledge and memory are preserved. He knows Lazarus, whom he had despised, and remembers his brethren whom he had left, that by the sight of the glory of one, whom he had despised, and by anxiety about the punishment of those whom he had loved to no purpose, he would be the more tormented."

Thy good things. Thine, *i.e.* earthly things, which thou didst consider true riches, things for which alone thou didst live in utter neglect of higher concerns. "Evil men," says S. Gregory, "receive in this life good things, for they consider transitory happiness to be their sole joy."

2. Thine, *i.e.* the reward due to thy scanty deserts. "For we are taught," says S. Chrysostom, "that the rich man was rewarded in this world for any good which he had done, and Lazarus punished for any evil which he might have committed. It follows therefore that Lazarus was comforted, because of his patience and goodness, which had not been regarded in this life, and the rich man tormented because of his sin and neglect of God, which had not been punished in this life." "So," S. Gregory says, "the fire of poverty purged the poor man's sins, and this world's fleeting happiness rewarded the rich man for any good which he had done."

3. Thine. Thou in this life didst receive thy portion of good, therefore there was nothing in store for thee in the future; but Lazarus received evil things, therefore happiness in the next world was his due. For thus God in his justice apportions heavenly blessings to the elect, but earthly benefits to the wicked and those who know Him not. Wherefore, let him who abounds in earthly riches and earthly honour, fear lest he may be deprived of them in the life to come: and let him who has none of these enjoyments in this world, look for them in heaven.

This truth Christ revealed to S. Catherine of Sienna, in a vision of which mention has been already made. (See chap. vi. 24).

Behold an image of eternity, the cross leading to the crown, but pleasure to destruction.

On these words of Abraham, S. Bernard exclaims, "Awake, ye drunken, and weep, for God is fearful in His judgments on the sons of men. Can it be that the rich man was in torment, solely because he received good things in his

lifetime? Clearly on this account alone!

“For we may not think that we were cast out of paradise because of God’s punishment of sin, in order that the wit of men might prepare for themselves another paradise here upon earth.

“Man was born to labour; if he refuses labour, he frustrates the purpose for which he was brought into the world, and how will he answer him who has ordained labour as the lot of man?”

He presses his argument yet further, and adds, “What shall we say to this? If in the final judgment misery takes the place of rejoicing, are not ills to be preferred to the good things of this life? For it is clear that the one are not really good nor the other actually evil. The truer then is the opinion of Solomon, ‘It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.’” Eccles. vii. 2.

And likewise Lazarus evil things. Sickness, poverty, and its attendant ills, which the worldly-minded consider evils, but which the followers of God account good, inasmuch as they conduce to holiness here, and happiness hereafter. S. Thomas, Chrysostom, and others.

But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

By many a misery, which in thy lifetime thou didst little regard.

Ver. 26.—*And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed.* (Chaos, in the Vulgate). Perhaps the rich man, as an increase to his torment was shown as in a vision the heavenly abode of the blessed, whither Abraham and Lazarus were to ascend a little after the death of Christ.

Hear S. Cyprian (*De Ascens. Dom.*): “The wicked will for ever dwell amidst devouring fire. There the rich man will burn without any one to cool his tongue with even one drop of water. Every evil lust and passion will have its appropriate punishment, and despair will add to the miseries of the lost. God will then have no pity on the penitent. Too late will be their confession, for when the door is shut, in vain will those who are without oil seek to enter. From thence there is no release. Christ once descended into hell; He will not go thither again. The condemned will not again see God in their dark dwelling. The sentence passed will be irrevocable, the judgment of condemnation stands changeless and fixed for all eternity.”

Hence S. Bernard says, “Thou in the midst of hell must be expecting that salvation, which is to be won in the midst of our earthly existence. But how canst thou imagine that thou wilt have in the midst of eternal burnings the power of obtaining pardon, when the time of pardon has passed away? There is no offering for sin for thee, who art dead in sins. The Son of God will not be crucified again. He died, He does not die again. His blood, which was poured out on the earth, does not flow down to hell. All sinners have drunk thereof on earth. There is none which the devils and the wicked

who are their companions can claim for the extinguishing of the flames which torment them.”

Mystically: S. Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Theophylact understand the gulf to mean the fixed and final separation of the just and unjust. See Rev. xxi., S. Matt. v. 25.

Hence S. Gregory, and after him the Interlinear, says, “Between Dives and Lazarus there is a gulf, because after death no man can change his reward, the damned cannot exchange lots with the blessed, nor the blessed with those who are lost.”

“The gulf,” says Titus, “indicates the difference between the just and unjust for as their desires and wishes were opposed, so now their condition is immutable.” “It also,” adds S. Augustine (*lib. ii. Quæst. Evang.*), “shows to those who are in prison, that by the unchangeableness of the divine sentence, no merciful aid can be rendered to them by the righteous, however much they may wish to give it.”

Allegorically. Lazarus lying at the rich man’s gate represents Christ, who by the lowliness of His Incarnation condescended to the case of the proud Jews, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table, *i.e.*, seeking from them the least works of righteousness, which at their own table, that is, when they had it in their power, they were too proud to perform, which works, although very slight, they would do, not out of the set purpose of a good life, but occasionally and by chance, like as crumbs are wont to fall from the table.

The sores are the sufferings of our Lord, which from weakness of the flesh, He deigned to undergo for us. The dogs are the Gentiles, accounted by the Jews sinners and unclean, who throughout the world softly and devoutly lick the wounds of Christ in the sacrament of His body and blood.

Abraham’s bosom, the hidden presence of God the Father, into which our Lord was received after His passion. Augustine (*lib. ii. Quæst. Evang.*) And again, *symbolically*, he goes on to say: “By the rich man we may understand the proud Jews; the purple and fine linen are the grandeur of the kingdom; the sumptuous feasting is the boasting of the Law; Lazarus, *i.e.* ‘assisted,’ some Gentile or publican, who is all the more relieved, as he presumes less on the abundance of his resources; the dogs are those most wicked men, who praise the evil works which another groans over and detests in himself; the five brethren are the Jews, bound by the five books of the Law.”

In like manner S. Gregory (*Hom. 40*) says, “Lazarus represents the Gentile people. The bursting forth of his sores is the confession of sin. The crumbs were denied him, for the proud Jews disdained to admit the Gentiles to the