

# Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Another very imaginative story comes to us this week: the rich man and Lazarus. This story is packed with unforgettable images and dialogue. The Gospel according to Luke provides a foundation for the social teachings of the Church. It consistently decries the scandalous gap between the rich and the poor, a situation that continues into our own time. The differences between the rich and the poor in the time of Jesus often mention food because it was scarce, as it still is in certain parts of the world today. The Rich Man, of course, was unable to take his riches with him after he died, nor any of the power associated with them. He ended up in the worst imaginable conditions, in a place of permanent global warming we might say.

We also learn something of the mindset of rich people like those in the Gospel. They are not open to spiritual wisdom if it involves giving what they have to the poor, even if someone from the past who knows what's right comes to them. The dramatic intervention asked for by the Rich Man is that someone "from the other side" go to his brothers and warn them of what's ahead if they don't change their ways: permanent downturn! The response is that not only is this not possible, even if it were, it would not work. They are stuck in their ways.

## A Gospel Word for the Home

### Luke 16:19–31

Today's Gospel reading is not only about giving food to the poor. It is more than that. It's about an attitude that is not even open to sharing one's leftovers with the needy. It is about what today is a serious distortion of Gospel values. In order to emphasize certain teachings, the Gospel of Luke often makes great use of exaggeration. Luke likes to present Jesus with a prophetic message that really gets to the bottom of things. He does that in this Gospel where the focus is on selfishness and callousness.

Most of us won't be like *that* rich man but we are still challenged to examine our deeper attitudes about sharing our bounty, our own riches, meager though they may be, with others who are more needy. In America, where most people have enough to eat and many are prone to overeating and obesity, and even our dogs are put on diets, we can all do our part to feed those in need whether they live in our neighborhood or thousands of miles away. Today's Gospel reading is an invitation to us individually and as families to do what we can to help "the Lazarus People" of the world.

## Parent Survival

Most parents are not rich in the financial sense. Government statistics claim that each child withdraws about \$200,000 from the family bank while living at home. In days long gone, children were viewed as economic assets because they would help at home or on the farm or in the family's place of business. Now this has changed. Still, children can still be viewed as "riches" of the family. Many parents will say that their greatest wealth lies in their children.

To think this way, however, a parent will have to go against the grain of contemporary values, which is very much tied to finances. The recent downturn in the global economy has brought this to the forefront. Money may not be everything, but if it isn't, it's close to the top for most people. So, here's the challenge. Look at your children, first, as immeasurably valuable gifts from God. Their worth cannot be put in monetary terms. People are the world's greatest resource. And "new people" come into life through their families. Parents are the ones who draw out their value, notice their importance, support their growth, and enrich all of humankind by the efforts made to give ever-increasing richness to the lives of their children. The great wealth of America is not to be found on Wall Street or Main Street, but in the homes of ordinary families. And unless parents know and affirm this, no one else will.

## Car or Meal Talk

Decide on one concrete thing your family can do as a family to help the needy.

## One-Line Prayer

God of abundance, create in us a more generous heart. Amen.