



September 26, 2010 The Twenty-sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

"...pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience and gentleness." 1 Timothy 6:11

Dear Friends;

My friend, the liturgical consultant, John Buscemi, tells a story about his commute to teach at the Chicago Theological Union. Walking from the "L" train station, he inevitably would be hit up by a number of people asking for change. John did not have enough money for everyone he was encountering.

At first, he did not know what to do after he gave the first person the money he had in his pocket. Then he realized so many of these people feel as if they are invisible because no one will look at them or acknowledge them. He said it is no wonder so many of them act psychotic; we would too if no acknowledged us.

So John decided that while he did not have money for everyone he did have something important that he could give—his presence and time. John decided that he would acknowledge each one who asked him for "change." After giving change to the first person he would greet the succeeding others and say, "I would love to help you but I have given what I have to your friend over there."

Inevitably the recipient of John's attention was grateful to be acknowledged. Each was given the gift of human dignity. So many of us walk by and stare past people on the street asking for help, afraid that we might be overwhelmed. John models a way that we could handle that situation without robbing people of their human dignity.

The parable of Lazarus and the rich man (from the Gospel of Luke) is a warning for us. The rich man failed to see the poor Lazarus lying at his door. It is the rich man's failure to see that condemns him. This tale reminds us the danger of missed opportunities.

We think we will have all the time in the world to do good for others. Jesus' parable sets the sobering truth before us—some opportunities can be lost forever and some decisions cannot be undone.

The first reading from Amos also reminds us that concern for the poor is not just for individuals but nations as well. Developing a culture, economic system or society that ignores the plight of the weak carries disastrous consequences.

Nations and individuals both need to ask themselves: "Who is it that we are ignoring and not seeing?" "Does our present comfortable lifestyle mean that others are in torment?" These are not easy questions. Nor can we dismiss them with facile bumper sticker jargon or the angry demagoguery of talk show hosts.

Jesus demands that we encounter him in the faces of the poor, disenfranchised, the stranger; and even the unlovely and undesired. Jesus made himself poor that we could be rich in the Spirit. Let us share his riches to all in need—both the hungry rich and the hungry poor.

Peace,

Fr Ron