

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

Amos 6:1, 4–7
1 Timothy 6:11–16
Luke 16:19–31

MONDAY

Luke 9:45–50
“... the least among all of you is the greatest.”

TUESDAY

Luke 9:51–56
“... he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

WEDNESDAY

John 1:47–51
“You will see greater things than these.”

THURSDAY

Luke 10:1–12
“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.”

FRIDAY

Luke 10:13–16
“... whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.”

SATURDAY

Matthew 18:1–5, 10
“Whoever becomes humble ... is the greatest”

Complacency or Compassion

At the time of this parable, many Jews believed that riches were a sign of God’s favor. Thus, the unnamed rich man, who was clothed in kingly purple and enjoying sumptuous feasts every day, appeared to be blessed. But even though he had more than he needed, he was indifferent to the needs of others, namely Lazarus.

Lazarus experienced poverty and other hardships of life. This diseased indigent was considered ritually unclean and abhorrent to the Pharisaic audience to whom Jesus addressed this story. They would have presumed his plight to be due to sinfulness.

The contrast is dramatic: Lazarus was shunned as a sinner while the rich man, who cared for no one else, was honored and privileged. However, death brought about a radical reversal to the situation.

In death, Lazarus was carried to the bosom of Abraham to share in the eternal banquet, while the rich man looked on from afar in a place of torment. He sought relief, asking that Lazarus be sent to give him a drop of water. He also begged that his brothers be warned and spared his plight. But both of his requests were denied.

The point of the parable is that if the rich man and his brothers didn’t listen to the prophets, their hearts were already hardened and even someone rising from the grave wouldn’t help.

We should also come away with the understanding that care for the poor is a non-negotiable responsibility, as seen in the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets.



The Faith of the Church

The bishops lament the excessive economic disparity between the rich and the poor, urging human solidarity. This solidarity calls for the distribution of goods and work toward a just social order. The Church teaches that disproportionate conditions of great wealth and dire poverty openly contradict the Gospel (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1938–1940).



Questions of the Week

When the rich man urges Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers, Abraham responds that they should listen to Moses and the prophets. Because his brothers’ hearts are hardened—they haven’t listened to the Prophets—it is doubtful that they would listen to the risen Lazarus.

Adults

What helps me develop compassion for the “poor at my door”?

Children

How can I share my blessings with those in need?

Visit us at www.FaithFirst.com (click on “Faith First for Families,” click on “Gospel Reflections”) and share today’s Gospel reading as a family.

Responding to God's Word . . .

The words of Amos in today's First Reading ring out, "Woe to the complacent!" This theme is further underscored in the parable in the Gospel of Luke.

First, there is a warning to the rich and comfortable that true riches lie in alleviating the needs of those who have little rather than amassing greater wealth.

Second, in the dialogue between Abraham and the rich man, the Christian community is challenged. The living must learn how to be in this world by reflecting upon the Scriptures, particularly the teachings of Jesus.

Finally, the Prophets throughout the Hebrew Scriptures clearly insist on respect for the poor.

There is no way around the preferential option for the poor declared by the bishops of Latin America, as well as by several popes. This theological principle is the foundation of Catholic social teaching and is an essential element of the Gospel.

There is always someone poorer than we "at our door step." Thus, we are urged to listen and reflect upon the Gospel messages regarding wealth and poverty, working toward a more just world, and recognizing and reaching out to the faces of poverty that surround us in our own cities and communities.

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. Search the newspaper for the face of a poor person in your community. Pray for this person, and keep the image of the face of poverty on your refrigerator as a daily reminder.

In the workplace or in school. Collect warm socks, hats, or gloves to distribute to the poor who face homelessness in the coming winter months.

In the community. Attend community meetings that deal with the plight of the poor in your area and participate in actions that will help alleviate their suffering.



Meditation Moment

A new pastor gave a great sermon. Next Sunday his congregation was filled with expectation. To their surprise the pastor repeated the same sermon. He did the same thing the next Sunday. When the congregation sent a committee to him seeking an explanation, he told them, "I plan to repeat it until I see you do something about it."

For reflection . . .

What keeps me from heeding God's word?

YOU CAN'T CROSS THE SEA
MERELY BY STANDING AND
STARING ACROSS THE WATER.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

FROM ACTION BY MARK LINK, SJ

A Prayer for Compassion

Lord, you provide
a feast for those who
work for justice. Mold my heart,
softening its hardness, that I might
love more expansively. Open my hands
to help the poor, widen my eyes to see
suffering and oppression, focus my mind
on sharing rather than hoarding.
Let compassion flow from my being,
that those I encounter might
teach me about you.
Amen.

*Carry this thought in your heart
as a guide for your faith journey
this week.*

Pursue righteousness,
godliness, faith, love,
endurance, gentleness. Fight
the good fight of faith; take
hold of the eternal life, to
which you were called . . .

1 Timothy 6:11-12

Profile in Faith

Blessed Frederick Ozanam

Blessed Frederick Ozanam was a nineteenth-century layman convinced of the inestimable worth of each human being. When asked, "What do you do besides talk to prove the faith you claim?" Frederick was stung by the question. He decided to act by visiting Paris tenements and offering assistance to the poor. Over the years he drew others into serving the poor of Paris under the patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul.

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