

- A young woman travelling home from her job as a teacher is saying her prayers on the bus. And God calls her to leave everything and go to serve the poor on the streets of Calcutta.
- Another young, non-Christian, woman walking home passes a Church and gets an irresistible urge to stop into that church. And God calls her to spend the rest of her life fighting for the rights of poor workers being cheated and abused.
- And my good friend Howie. His job required him to be in work very early each morning - about 5am. Each day on his way to work he would pass by many homeless people that live on the streets of Manhattan. Usually he would pass by them in a hurry, sometimes cross the street to avoid them, sometimes he would give someone a dollar or some change he would have in his pocket.
- One morning he noticed a homeless man sitting in a doorway. As he passed by he heard a voice say “Can you help me to get some food?” So Howie went to the coffee cart on the corner and bought a cup of coffee and a bagel for the man.
- As Howie told it “I went back to bring the food. When I leaned down to hand the man the bag, he lifted his head, looked right at me and it was the face of Jesus. The face I’ve seen 100 times before in pictures and statues in my Church, Jesus was looking right at me”.
- Howie told me this encounter was life changing for him. He came to know deep in his soul that Jesus is present with the poor. He said I knew then that each time I cared for the poor, I cared for Jesus. He said he came to know that Jesus has a particular love for the poor and looks to us to be His hands to help them.
- That encounter lit a fire in Howie that changed him forever. To this day he coordinates “Midnight Runs” where

volunteers bring food and clothing to the homeless on the streets of Manhattan.

- Our call to follow Jesus, be his hands in this world, be his disciple, may or may not be as dramatic as that of Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Saint Dorothy Day or my friend Howie - but the message is still the same. When you care for the poor, you care for Jesus.
- If you want to follow Jesus, enter His kingdom, and share in eternal life – **it is an absolute necessity to care for those in need.**
- This message is reinforced strongly in our scripture readings today.
- In the first reading the prophet Amos has harsh criticism for the rich people of his time who lived lavish lives, wasted away their resources while the poor around them died of starvation. He tells them there will be a heavy price to pay for this.
- In our Gospel reading we see a very rich man who refused to share his gifts with the poor in any way. It is really a story about the sin of omission. Notice we don't see the rich man actively doing anything against the poor man. He simply did not do the good he could have done. And we see he pays a serious price for that sin.
- And the Gospel reminds us we shouldn't look for any more new, dramatic reminders about how to live our lives- we have a constant reminder- The Risen Lord Jesus- who constantly calls us to care for those in need.
- In our second reading today St. Paul encourages us to listen to Jesus' call. If we want to be one with the Lord both here in this place and forever in eternal life – Paul says go for it!! It's ours for the taking- go answer the call to care for the poor and needy. And answering the call will come with some challenges. Paul tells us we must compete (work hard/strive) for the faith.

- We have to recognize the poor and needy in our lives. Take the time to actively look around and see.
- Day after day, Lazarus was at the gate of the rich man's home. A daily invitation for the rich man to put aside his selfishness and help a fellow human being in need. The rich man was blinded to God's call. He never saw it.
- Sometimes those in need are closer to us than we think: maybe the homeless on your way to work, but maybe even a close friend or family member, someone at school or work. Answering the Lord's call requires we look around us and see what people are experiencing.
- We need to realize there are different types of need, different types of hunger:
- There is economic need of course: those in need of food, clothing, money.
- But there are also other types of hunger. Those with physical hunger suffering from illness and poor health. Those with emotional hunger battling depression, stress, anxiety, addictions. Those with spiritual hunger- those that don't know God or have a tough time believing God loves them.
- We can help ease these struggles. We can care for the poor in so many ways. We can cook and shop and clean. We can give words of comfort and encouragement. We can just spend time listening. We can pray for and pray with those in need.
- Right here in our parish we have opportunities to reach out to the needy. In a few weeks we will have our clothing drive and the giving tree. There are baskets at every door to collect food for the Hope Food Pantry and many other ways to reach out right here in the parish.
- Answering the Lord's call requires that we have a change in attitude. We must want to care for the poor and needy not just feel obligated to do it.
- We usually like to get things in return for our efforts. We work for money, go to school for degrees and advancement.

We are conditioned to look for a payoff. Yet Jesus calls us to give freely and expect nothing in return. That's another attitude change.

- How do we make these changes in attitude? It's impossible to do on our own. But God can do it. And God wants to do it. Our job is to pray. Like Mother Teresa did on that bus. Like Dorothy Day did in that Church. We need to be open and give ourselves over to God. Ask God to change us. He will answer that prayer – just watch.
- Finally, we can't get demoralized or discouraged when we see so much poverty in the world and wonder if one person can really make a difference. That's a trap. Each one of us can make a difference in the life of others. Jesus told us so and he expects it.
- My patron Saint Therese of Lisieux (whose feast day is this week- October 1st) tells us in her writings to "Grow where we are planted." We don't need to look far or to do big heroic acts. There are plenty of opportunities to love, to be God's love, right in front of us everyday (at school, work, in our families) Therese said don't miss them. Seek to be holy in the ordinary things of our everyday life.
- One of her favorite sayings was "Do small things with great love". Small and simple are just fine - like a smile, a kind word, a helping hand or note of encouragement to someone who needs it.
- St. Therese calls us to trust that where you are planted at this very moment is exactly where God wants you to be. Find a way to see Him there. Find a way to be His love there.
- See the opportunities right in front of us, do little things with great love, pray for others. This is what Therese called "The Little Way" a simple, powerful teaching and a sure way to reach heaven.
- And in those moments when we feel overwhelmed, or when we just want to look the other way, or live just for ourselves the message today is: don't look the other way. Look at the

person in need. Look at their face and see the face of Jesus.
He will be right there with the poor, waiting for your help.