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-- There are numerous parables in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Lots of people are a part of those stories. But, in all of these stories, only one person is called by name.

-- I didn't realize that until I heard Fr. David Dwyer, a Paulist father, talking about it on the Catholic Channel (Sirius radio). That one person who is named is Lazarus, the poor beggar in the gospel parable we just heard. (This parable is unique to Luke's gospel.)

-- Even the rich man is not named, though he's often called Dives (which is simply Latin for 'rich man'). The fact that Lazarus is called by name is not an accident. And his name means *the one God cares for*.

-- Like so many of the poor, he was invisible to so most people around him. Notice how, on a city street, people will turn away from a beggar or someone with ragged clothing. I know—I've done that myself.

-- There's no indication that the rich man abused Lazarus or did anything to hurt him. But he didn't pay attention to him. He lived as if Lazarus did not exist. He was right outside his door, but he might as well have lived across a great canyon from the rich man.

-- That didn't change in the afterlife. There was still a great chasm, only the roles were reversed. But like so many rich or powerful people, this rich man seemed to think he could command people to come to his service just as he did on earth.

-- *Send Lazarus to me with water...send him to my brothers*. He was ordering people around! It reminds me of how Saddam Hussein, when captured in the hole in which he was hiding out, proudly proclaimed, *I am Saddam Hussein, rightful President of the Republic of Iraq!*

-- And, though he didn't pay attention to Lazarus on earth, the rich man knew he was there. He even knew his name. But he didn't acknowledge him, or talk to him personally by name.

-- People draw many lessons from this parable about how we treat the poor, and how we should be more generous with our possessions, even

if we don't think we're rich. After all, we do live in one of the richest nations on earth.

-- Those are legitimate considerations. But, perhaps there is another lesson we can learn, even without reaching into our pocketbooks. That is to address people by name, particularly people who are on what we would consider the "lower rung" of society.

-- Perhaps you go regularly to a restaurant, where you see a particular waitress most of the time. Ask her name, and thank her for her service.

-- Young people, maybe there's a kid at school no one talks to. Go up to him, introduce yourself, call him/her by name if you know it. If you don't, ask for their name.

-- Indeed, this parable tells me I should make an effort this week to call someone I rarely talk to by name, and to ask the name of someone I've seen regularly but still don't know by name, even if I'm embarrassed to do so.

-- The chasms we set up between ourselves and others will not disappear when we die. And someone has risen from the dead on our behalf—Jesus Christ himself.

-- We can break down those barriers by acknowledging them by name. Lazarus was the one God cared for. God cares for the poor, the sick, the disabled and those whom society considers to be worthless.

-- Shouldn't we show them the respect they deserve, by speaking to them with respect and calling them by name?