

**09/25/16 ..... 26 C**

-- A Catholic pastor from Richmond just posted a story on a homily website that I can easily relate to. He recalled an incident when he was a seminarian in Washington, DC and was coming home with friends from a wonderful Mass, which they were talking about on the way.

-- He and his buddies stepped around something on the sidewalk that looked like a pile of trash. As they passed, they heard a voice from behind them: *You didn't even notice me!* The voice was coming from the sidewalk; what looked like a pile of trash was actually a homeless man.

-- I can relate to this because I passed by homeless people in that same city when I was a young priest doing graduate work. I may have seen them, but I probably didn't pay much attention to them.

-- This parable of the rich man and Lazarus speaks to the question of whether we notice people in need. Lazarus was at the door of this rich man's house. He probably passed by him several times a day.

-- But did he really notice him? Of course, he saw him. The parable suggests he even knew his name. But he didn't do much about it. It sounds like he simply passed by him, again and again.

-- The sin of the rich man wasn't that he was rich. It was that he saw this human being in front of him and didn't really notice his need.

-- In fact, his attitude (even after his death) was to order Lazarus to do favors for him. That was what he was used to doing while he was alive. People worked for him and were his servants. So it was a natural reaction to ask Abraham to send him over to him or, if that failed, to his brothers.

-- There are many reasons we may not want to pay attention to someone in need. Perhaps we feel we will be overwhelmed, since the needs around us are too great for us to tackle alone. That's understandable.

-- But that doesn't mean we can't notice them, acknowledge their humanity and treat them with respect. I know that is something I have to examine my conscience about.

-- Last night we had a wonderful Mass and celebration for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this Church. It would be easy to be wrapped up in the joy of that celebration. And that's fine and good that we do so.

-- But, if we are a true Church community of faith, we also must be willing to notice. We must be willing to notice the hungry persons in our community. We must be willing to notice the single mother struggling to make ends meet.

-- We must be willing to notice the people who come here Thursday evenings because they or a family member are struggling with drug addiction. We must be willing to notice the woman who is afraid every day that her husband or boyfriend will abuse her or her children.

-- In most cases we will not be able to solve their problems. But we can notice them and give them support. We can reach out with a human touch. Indeed, the quality of our parish community depends upon that as much or more than the quality of our liturgical celebrations.

-- This Thursday, our Ministerial Association had a discussion about a homeless man in Wauseon currently camped out near one of the downtown Churches. I learned more about his situation than I'd known previously. It's always a careful dance to minister to people like him without enabling bad behavior.

-- No matter what, though, he is a human being, and is entitled to be treated with dignity, just as all who come to our Church seeking assistance. Will we notice them? Will we notice the person who may live on our block who is hurting?

-- God notices them. He only asks us to do the same thing.