

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, September 25, 2022

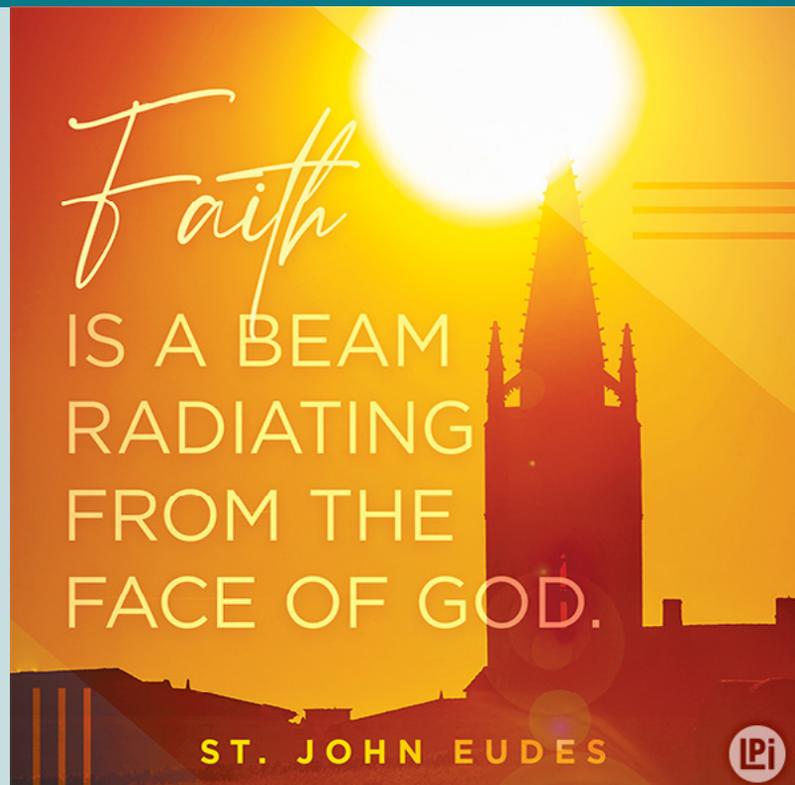
Living the Call to Discipleship

Written by Bro. Silas Henderson, S.D.S

Amos 6:1a, 4-7

1 Timothy 6:11-16

Luke 16:19-31



“There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table.”

— Luke 16:19-21

Jesus was undoubtedly a gifted storyteller and the parable of Lazarus that we hear proclaimed [this coming Sunday](#) is certainly among one of the most powerful that we hear in the gospels. Falling as it does within a section of Luke’s Gospel that contains several teachings on wealth and material goods, it is easy to reduce the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man (traditionally named “Dives”) into a sort of mortality tale about the dangers of greed and selfishness. However, the liturgy for this Sunday invites us to take a broader view, particularly when we consider the story alongside the [second reading](#), taken from the First Letter to Timothy.

In this passage, Saint Paul urges his young disciple, Timothy, to “pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses” (6:11-12). Paul is reminding Timothy — and each of us — that our faith demands total dedication to God and faithful witness to Christ. While few of us have pastoral

responsibilities like Timothy, each of us does have a part to play in the life and mission of the Church. Not only do we see this demonstrated in wonderful ways in the lives of the saints, but, as Pope Francis has reminded us, “Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel” (*The Joy of the Gospel*, no. 20). Each of us is being invited to seek those things that are of God and “compete well for the faith.” This means that we are called to persevere in living out our individual, unique vocation of service to God and the Church. In accepting the Lord’s invitation, each of us accepts the demands of a discipleship that takes us out of ourselves, and which calls for us to move beyond our preferences, comforts, and complacency.

This sacrifice and service is what the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man is really about. As Pope Benedict observed in his encyclical *Spe Salvi*: “Jesus admonishes us through the image of a soul destroyed by arrogance and opulence, who has created an impassable chasm between himself and the poor man; the chasm of being trapped within material pleasures, the chasm of forgetting the other, of incapacity to love, which then becomes a burning and unquenchable thirst” (no. 44).

Competing “well for the faith” — living our call to be disciples and to manifest the presence of Christ in the world — doesn’t allow for selfish ambition, apathy, complacency, or indifference to the plight of others (cf. [Amos 6:1a, 4-7](#)). This isn’t about political agendas, government budgets, or some radical ideology. Rather, this call is grounded in the Gospel which forms the

starting point and is the focus of our faith: “Being Church means being God’s people, in accordance with the great plan of his fatherly love. This means that we are to be God’s leaven in the midst of humanity. It means proclaiming and bringing God’s salvation into our world, which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope, and strengthened on the way. The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven, and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel” (*The Joy of the Gospel*, no. 114).

— Bro. Silas Henderson, S.D.S.

Prayer

A Prayer to Brighten the Lives of Others

O God,
who cover yourself with light as with a garment,
shine in us,
putting to flight all the forces
of darkness and guilt,
of sin and selfishness.
Shine also through us
to any that live in shadow,
and so fill us with your radiant spirit
that we may be a lamp unto a neighbor’s feet,
and a light unto their path.
And when this day is done,
may ever face we have met
be the brighter for our meeting,
and every heart braver,
with new joy and cheer and grace and strength.

— Theodore Parker (d. 1860)

(from *The New Saint Joseph People’s Prayer Book*)