

SUNDAY PLUS

Compassion and care

I care

By Gerlinde Symons



I recently had a conversation with a Muslim prisoner who was in our jail's Care and Separation Unit. He was feeling anxious because he knew he was being transferred to another prison that morning, but he didn't know why, or where he was going. He was worried that his family would no longer be able to visit him if the new prison was too far away. He felt he had been treated unfairly and that people didn't care.

I told him that I cared – I listened to his frustrations and concerns and, when he told me he was a man of faith, I encouraged him to place all his trust in God, to pray for protection and to have hope for the future. I wasn't able to change his situation, but at that

moment all I could do was to be a loving presence.


In our Gospel reading today, the rich man living in luxury didn't notice the poor man Lazarus nearby, who was hungry and wounded and in great need. When the rich man died, he went to Hades and was

in agony. For Lazarus, the "hell" he had endured on earth was over when he died and he was comforted.

Perhaps this week we can reflect on the Gospel reading and ask ourselves: Am I sensitive to the needs of those around me?

Am I willing to listen to those in distress, and comfort those who have been wounded by life's circumstances? How can I be a loving presence to those that I meet in my daily life?

Gerlinde Symons is a lay Catholic chaplain in a UK prison.

Loving Lord, there have been moments in my life when special people have shown me compassion and understanding. Their care made such a difference. Watch over them. Protect them. Bless them. Help me to be there for others.  Amen.

Take care!

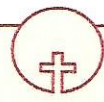
By Cowan Watson

The story of Lazarus is surely a salutary one for our times, which are marked by an ever-increasing gap between the haves and the have-nots. We all know the names of the big-players and the super-rich who dominate the news headlines but in Jesus' story it is only the "insignificant" Lazarus who is named. The unidentified rich man ends up in Hades while Lazarus is carried by the angels to rest at Abraham's side, the

exact opposite of what the Pharisees expected would happen to a man like Lazarus. However, this is not a parable about what happens after death, but a warning that true happiness is not to be found at the expense of others. Jesus reminds us that we have a responsibility to be good stewards of what we've been given. Our actions have consequences, either bringing us closer to or setting us further apart from God.

Cowan Watson, the parish secretary for the cathedral parish in Aberdeen, is also the editor of the diocese's magazine, The Light of the North.

Feast of the week Wednesday 21 September St Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897)



"She's the most beautiful lady I've seen in my entire life!" The six-year-old stood admiringly before a huge poster of St Thérèse of Lisieux during the 2009 visit of her relics to England and Wales. His unexpected remark caused nearby adults to smile, perhaps touched more by childhood innocence than deep theology.

"I'm so grateful", a man commented on watching the large crowd in Salford Cathedral. "People have come from everywhere because it's an opportunity to 'feel' Catholic. We don't have many such occasions these days. I'm so grateful for a chance to 'feel' my faith in the company of others."

"We're carrying roses because, in my country, every flower is a prayer. When we place our roses on her casket, we are really offering our prayers." Was this woman legally or illegally in Britain? Was God bothered about her immigration status or did he, instead, see the roses which she had struggled to afford?

St Thérèse, pray for us.

Compassion — which Jesus feels — is not simply feeling pity: it's more! It means to suffer with, in other words to empathise with, the suffering of another, to the point of taking it upon oneself. Jesus is like this: he suffers together with us, he suffers with us, he suffers for us.

Pope Francis

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| Today: Amos 6:1, 4-7 1 Timothy 6:11-16 Luke 16:19-31 | Monday: Job 1:6-22 Luke 9:46-50 | Tuesday: Job 3:1-3, 11-17, 20-23 Luke 9:51-56 | Wednesday: Job 9:1-12, 14-16 Luke 9:57-62 | Thursday: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 or Apocalypse 12:7-12 John 1:47-51 | Friday: Job 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5 Luke 10:13-16 | Saturday: Job 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17 Luke 10:17-24 | Next Sunday: Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14 Luke 17:5-10 |
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