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**Siloam Springs, AR**

I just returned from a two-week vacation in India, and I really enjoyed it. Most of my family still lives in New Delhi, and it's always fun to catch up and see how much everyone has changed since our last visit. Now, it's not all roses, to be quite honest. For one thing, there is the traffic in New Delhi: people drive all over the road and pass each other on the left and right, even in the face of on-coming traffic! One of the biggest wastes of government money is to paint lines on the roads since no one pays any attention to them. And at rush hour, the traffic is at a standstill. The distance it would take us to drive 15 minutes would take someone there an hour and a ½. Now, one good result if you visit New Delhi is that when you return you will never complain about the traffic here in Northwest Arkansas!

Now, there is still a lot of poverty in India, and it's really heart-wrenching when you see it. Outside of churches or along the streets you see people begging for money. Often they only have one arm, or one person we saw sitting on the sidewalk had no legs. One thing my father did really impressed me. Whenever we went out to eat or went shopping, he would ask for change in coins. Then, whenever we met a poor person who was begging along the way, my dad always had something to give them. I could tell that seeing such poverty really broke my parents' heart, and they wanted to do something to help them.

In the gospel today, Jesus tells the story of the rich man and poor Lazarus. Now, apparently the rich man never gave Lazarus anything

because Jesus says that Lazarus “would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table.” But, you know, there’s something even more sinister in the rich man’s behavior, and that is he didn’t even care to help the poor man. I mean, it would have been one thing to see poor Lazarus and feel pity for him or at least say a prayer for him, but the rich man wouldn’t even do that much. You see, the rich man’s sin wasn’t just that he didn’t do anything to help Lazarus, but his sin was also that he didn’t even care.

Have you ever heard of Fr. John Corapi? If you regularly watch EWTN, the Catholic T.V. channel, you’ve probably seen him. He gives a very powerful testimonial about his own conversion. As a young man, his only desire was to be rich and famous – sound like anyone you know? So, he moved to Beverly Hills and became a wealthy real estate broker. But then one day a friend introduced him to cocaine, which began a slow but steady addiction to that powerful drug. The addiction became so severe that Corapi spent all his money on it, and finally ended up a penniless beggar on the street. And then he said this: “The next time you see a poor beggar on the street, don’t pretend like you don’t see him or cross over to the other side of the street. Remember: God can take a poor beggar like that and make him into a priest of Jesus Christ.” And I gotta tell you, after hearing that, I’ve never looked at poor people in the same way. In other words, God doesn’t forget the poor, and neither should we.

My friends, how do you look at the poor people you encounter in life? Oh, of course, we don’t have the same kind of poverty here in the

United States as they do in India. We have soup kitchens, and the Salvation Army, and hospitals that care for the sick. But what about our attitude toward the poor: are we like the rich man who didn't even care or even say a prayer for the poor? Do at least our hearts break when we see the poor on T.V. like those suffering in Darfur, or in Somalia, or do we just change the channel? But, you know, sometimes the poor are a lot closer to us than we realize. Mother Teresa once said that you don't have to go to India or Africa to find poor people. The poor are in our own families: the poor are those who hunger and thirst for love and acceptance, those who need forgiveness and compassion, those who need encouragement and hope. Folks, we love the poor when we take care of those who are close to us, and when we take care of those around the world.

In this Mass, may the Lord Jesus give us the grace to love the poor. May our hearts break when we see their suffering on T.V. May we remember them in our prayers at Mass and when we pray our Rosary. May we help them in their need as best as we are able. "My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus received what was bad; but now he is comforted, whereas you are tormented." Let us remember and help the poor, so that we, too, may be comforted in heaven.

Praised be Jesus Christ!