

My homily for Haiti Weekend 2025

Amos 6, 1a. 4-7

Psalm: 146, 7. 8-9. 9-10

1 Tm 6, 11-16

Lc 16, 19-31

INTRODUCTION

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I hope you all are doing good. During this Haiti Weekend, I cannot physically stand before you because of a problem with my expired visa to come to the US. However, even if I'm far from you because of the distance; I'm still felt close to you because of the bridge of our faith in God. This is the reason why I'm feeling glad today to be able to share my homily with you behind the ambo of the new church building you have committed to building in Duchity.

THE NEW CHURCH

It is sure that the church construction is not completely done because we still need to plaster the outside of the walls and add tiles on the floor, but we are now able to use it. And for this great step in the construction process, thanking all of you is the least I can do on behalf of the people in Duchity and in my personal name. Only God can reward you as He did for poor Lazarus in the today's Gospel. Poor Lazarus can be considered in fact as the true rich man because all his wealth was relied on God during his suffering.

THE READINGS

As I have just mentioned, in the Gospel, St Luc shares with us the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus. Jesus said that the rich man had his fill of good things, living in opulence, while poor Lazarus had his fill of bad things. Poor Lazarus desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. He was suffering with sores that only dogs came to lick. Then after their death, the rich man goes into the flames of the Hades and poor Lazarus carried into Abraham's bosom by the Angels.

Now, why was the rich man paid with the flames of the Hades? Does that mean being rich with material wealth is a sin? No, being rich is not a sin. He was sent into the Hades not because of his wealth, but because he was blind in his opulence. He wasn't compassionate. He didn't take care of poor Lazarus who was suffering with sores and hunger before his gate. This is the reason why after his death his life turns into the true poor one in the flames of Hades.

In this sense, I can say that the true rich man is everyone in opulence or in poverty who has faith in God, who is compassionate; and who is capable to listen to Moises, to the Prophets and after all to Jesus who rose from the dead as the king of the kings to bring us eternal life.

Considering the twinning relationship throughout the years without doubt I can say that you, at St Thomas, and us the people of St. Marie Madeleine are the true rich man, helping Lazarus, the children, with education and food. As a gift to us, this two-way relationship shows how to be compassionate to others.

HAITI TODAY

Unfortunately, through the years, the hunger and the sores of the Haitian people are multiplied. The country is diving into darkness day after day with the violence of the gangs who control more areas than last year. Even with UN Kenia Force present on the ground, the chaos seems unbreakable. There are more than 500 000 people who are obliged to leave unwillingly their house inside Port-au Prince. This month, more than 40 people were violently killed by the gangs around Cabaret, a city closed to the Port-au-Prince. Consequently, no one in Haiti feels good because life is like an unbearable burden on our shoulder. And for us in Duchity as in the great South, we are apparently safe. But the fact that we rely on Port-au-Prince for almost everything, we are also deeply affected by this situation of hunger and chaos.

THE STORY & REQUEST – EDUCATION & FOOD

This year, I would like to ask you to consider increasing your giving as you are able to cool the children's life at school with the possibility to be well educated and to be fed properly. I know that you have done many things for us, but unfortunately, things are worsened in the country.

The teachers are still asking for more money because the situation of the country is too bad. In this sense, this year we hope to be able to bring a 10 % rise to the teachers' salaries and for all the employees. **Last year the average salary for an elementary school teacher was \$909.29 per year. 10% of this amount is \$ 90.93. So, the average salary of the elementary teachers per year will be \$ 1000.21 per year. About the Secondary and High school teachers, the average salary was \$ 83.02 per hour. 10 % of this amount is \$ 8.30. So, it will turn into \$91.32 per hour.** Additional help is also needed to repair the sheet metal roof of a school building which is completely leaked, to build or buy new seats for the children at the school, and to accommodate the main restroom of the school, which shouldn't be used.

The school lunch is a lifesaving program for children. Because of it, more of them succeeded in this last school year. However, the fact that the country's situation is worse, it becomes more difficult for parents to pay \$ 0.38 US to contribute as required. Not a great majority of them paid this total fee required for the school lunch because they are in great misery. Some even intend to keep their children home because they can't pay for them. That is why, this year, we need more help. Note that because of the inflation, this year, an amount of \$ 2.50 US per child is needed daily to properly feed the children. In this sense, a **daily gift of \$ 381.60 US would feed a child for one year. Additional resources are needed to buy new appropriate dishes and help accommodate the eating space to avoid eating inside the classroom.** This coming year we may have between 350 to 450 children.

CONCLUSION

Stating these points, I can now say that the true rich man is every one of us at St Thomas the Apostle Church in Naperville and at St Marie Madeleine in Duchity who use our faith in God and our material wealth to help the poor Lazarus, the children in Duchity, through this twinning partnership. If we are wealthy with material, we are mostly rich with compassion and generosity. I pray that God will send the angels to carry each of us into Abraham's bosom after our death as He did for Lazarus. May His blessings pour into our life forever and ever. Amen!