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Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
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## Pastor's Column

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### Lazarus Is at the Gate!

**Lazarus is at the gate!** He has been out of work for weeks due to downsizing. He sells his car, takes out a second mortgage on his home, and he keeps sending out resumes. He is at the age when others are planning retirement, but with no pension, no portable health insurance, and ever-increasing debt, his prospects look dim. Thoughts of suicide have become more frequent.

**Lazarus is at the gate!** He is an undocumented immigrant who paid almost \$2,000 American dollars to be crammed into a windowless, airless moving van to travel for days through the desert in order to cross the Texas border into the United States. He doesn't want to break the law, but the needs of his wife and children far outweigh his respect for the Immigration and Naturalization Service. He has heard of a job at a chicken processing plant in Mississippi. When he arrives for work, he is told that since he has no green card, he'll be paid \$5 per hour. He lives in an unfurnished trailer with no electricity or running water with eight other men in similar circumstances. Some of them are sick because of unsanitary conditions. No one dares go to the doctor. When payday rolls around, all eight men accompany each other to Western Union to send their money home to their families. They have been robbed several times by local gangs, but they dare not contact the police for fear of being deported.

**Lazarus is at the gate!** He is an American soldier who has just returned from Afghanistan. His tour of duty has caused him some severe psychological disorders. Presently, he is very depressed. He needs to talk to people, but family and friends are too busy to give him the time he needs to talk things out.

**Lazarus is at the gate!** He is 17 years old and has been swallowed up by the porn industry in Hollywood because his parents threw him out of the house when he admitted to being gay. He is one of countless others who will contract AIDS or become addicted to drugs or alcohol and die without ever knowing the joys and security of family.

**Lazarus is at the gate!** She has been in the nursing home for almost 10 years but her visitors have been few. When she hints about coming to visit for the holidays, family members quickly change the subject. So she retreats into herself, bides her time, and prays for death.

**Lazarus is at the gate!** He stands at the same intersection asking for money day after day. He says that he is homeless. We say "why doesn't he go to a shelter?" "How do I know what he is going to do with the money that I would give him?" "It probably will support his drug or alcohol addiction." We say these things to rationalize our not giving him money. But do we support homeless shelters with donations of money and the willingness for them to be built in our local areas?

**Lazarus is at the gate!** She is our sister-in-law, our daughter-in-law, our son-in-law, who just doesn't seem to fit into the family. When is she/he going to get with it and become like us?

**Lazarus is at the gate!** He lives just next door and always seems to be around when you are coming home or leaving for work. You know he has been lonely since his wife of more than 40 years died recently. But you just don't have the time to listen. You hurry by and hope he doesn't follow or call out after you.

**Lazarus is at the gate!** She is eighteen, single, pregnant, living on the street, supporting herself by selling her body. She had been in five foster homes because her mother had physically abused her and her father sexually molested her. She has no place to go. Nobody wants to help her. Everyone just seems to take advantage of her.

**Lazarus is at the gate!** He is a relative who needs medical attention and care. For some reason, you are the lucky one he has chosen to help him. How do you find time in light of all your other responsibilities? And you ask yourself: "How did he become my burden?"

**Lazarus is at the gate!** Each Lazarus we meet constitutes a challenge to our humanity, to the quality of our Christianity, to the authenticity of our discipleship.

Have we the eyes to see, ears to hear, a heart to understand, and hands to help the "*Lazaruses*" whom God sends into our lives?

**Lazarus is at the gate!** Shall we tend to this person now or, like the rich man in the Gospel, shall we wait until it is too late?

F. Mike