

The Richness of Life

Joyce Rupp | Feb. 12, 2010

I was standing in the aisle in the grocery store when a sharp spiritual pain pinched my awareness and let me see the rest of the world. I was appalled. I realized I could buy anything in the store that I wanted. The richness of my life slapped me in the face as I stood there, thinking about how many people do not even have a store like that available to them, let alone the money to purchase what is in it.



Not long after that experience, I read some statistics in an

article by Sr. Joan Chittister, that increased my awareness of my own richness in light of the world's poverty:

Social statisticians tell us that if the earth's population were a village of 100 people, there would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, and 8 Africans. Only 14 people in the village would be from both North and South America combined. Seventy of the people in this village would be nonwhite. Seventy would be non-Christian. Seventy would be illiterate. Fifty of them would be malnourished. Fifty percent of all the money in the village would be held by six people ? and all of those would be white, male Americans??

Reading *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt increased my awareness of how fifty percent of the world are impoverished while I sit in my comfortable shelter, feasting daily on good food. As McCourt described going hungry day after day in his memoir of a childhood in Ireland's desolate time, I thought of how rarely I consider the rest of humanity, while day after day I am in my smug, smug little world of satisfaction.

My awareness continued to deepen as I read McCourt's description of the three small boys sleeping on one old, raggedy coat, covered by two thin ones in the damp, cold climate, and of his licking the newspapers he found in which someone's fish and chips had been wrapped. This is not just something that has happened in the past. This kind of situation continues to exist, day after day, in many cities, villages and isolated country places.

But there is also hope. There are people in wealthy nations whose awareness of the rest of the world is making a difference. They want to help. They are working to change the great gap between the haves and have-nots.

I see the choices these generous and compassionate people are making. Their selflessness and kind-heartedness encourages me to make better decisions about how I live and how I give.

I do not believe that it is a matter of condemning a comfortable life but, rather, of wanting this for all people. It is good that we are challenged to use our resources in such a way that others can also have a more humane life. It is essential that we are reminded often that each human being is our sister or our brother. It is the message Jesus taught so long ago. It is an ageless teaching and we are always in need of re-learning and living the message. Lent is a good time to re-enter the heart of this teaching.

From *Out of the Ordinary: Prayers, Poems, and Reflections for Every Season* by Joyce Rupp

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**Prayer action suggestion:**

Choose a Lenten penance in which your life will make a tangible difference in the life of another.



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