

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

CYCLE C

Amos 8: 4-7
1 Timothy 2: 1-8
Luke 16: 1-13

OPENING PRAYER

(A crucifix, an open bible, money and jewelry are arranged on a table in the gathering place. When the members have assembled, the leader invites all to quiet themselves in the presence of God. A selection of instrumental music is played, after which prayer continues as follows,)

Leader: Praise, you servants of the LORD,
 praise the name of the LORD.
Blessed be the name of the LORD
 both now and forever.
[Hallelujah!]

From the rising of the sun to its setting
 let the name of the LORD be praised.
The LORD raises the needy from the dust,
 lifts the poor from the ash heap,
Seats them with princes,
 the princes of the people,
Gives the childless wife a home,
 the joyful mother of children.
Hallelujah!

Psalm 113: 1-3, 7-9

All: As we reflect and share with one another, Lord, may your Spirit illuminate us and fill us with your wisdom. Amen.

COMMENTARY

The parable about the steward raises many perplexing questions. At first glance, it would appear that the steward is being praised for his dishonesty. From another angle, it might appear that this is a lesson about being prudent and wise with one's possessions. Yet, there is a deeper message here. In Jesus' time, health and wealth were taken to suggest that a person had God's favor. The social system placed those who were wealthy at the top of society. Those who were poor were shunned. The wealthy, of course, were a very small percentage of the people. Many had no way of supporting themselves and they depended on the generosity of others to survive. Old Testament teaching instructed that almsgiving, acts of charity, could result in the forgiveness of one's sins. This is a teaching many took seriously.

Jesus' message was radical in that it challenged the social system in place. He taught that God's love did not depend on one's social standing or physical wellness. In fact, God's favor rested especially with the poor. This was upsetting news for the wealthy, for Jesus' message appears to be asking for one to give all one's possessions away. Jesus certainly calls for a clear choice between "God and mammon".

Jesus understood that one's values, one's basic orientation shape one's life and actions. Money, possessions, status become the master, the driving force, of many lives. And when they do, little thought is given to God's beloved poor. But, the prophet warns that the Lord will not forget the deeds of those "who trample upon the needy...."

It is our relationship with God that must be our first priority. It must be what is behind all our actions. When relationship with God is the value that directs our lives and actions, whatever our industriousness produces belongs above all to God. When this is the case, what we possess is readily placed in service to those in need. This is not a matter of charity, it is a matter of justice. Our salvation depends on it.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

How torn between serving "God and mammon" is your life?

What change could you make in your life to stand more closely with the poor?

- ◆ How much do money, possessions, and status drive the actions of your life?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Advocate for the poor. Join the action for justice that may be sponsored by your diocesan Catholic Conference to receive legislative alerts to contact your state and national representatives about pending legislation.
- ◆ Spend time at a local soup kitchen or homeless shelter. Speak personally to the people you serve. Allow them to enrich you even as you try to help them.
- ◆ If you have access to the internet, log on to hungersite.com daily to donate free food for the needy and to learn about hunger in the world.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader calls members to a few moments of silence. The leader then invites prayers of praise, thanksgiving and petition. To each prayer members respond, “Praise the Lord, who lifts up the poor.”)

Leader: God of all: Give us eyes to see your world as you see it. Give us the courage to stand with the poor. Help us to recognize and change when we serve other gods. We give you all that we are and have to be in service to your people. In Jesus’ name we pray.

All: Amen.

(The session concludes with the praying of the Lord’s Prayer.)

