

25th Sunday C

LORD OF THE OPPRESSED

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www.sjti.ac.za/resources_homily.htm

First Reading: Amos 8:4-7
Response: **"Praise the Lord, who raises the poor"** (Ps. 112:1,7)
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 112:1-2,4-8
Second Reading: Timothy 2:1-8
Gospel: Luke 16:1-13

The Risen Lord conquers all, in spite of greed and one-upmanship in our hearts and in the world. Economic success and exploitation seems to be the goal in land and home. Jesus paid the highest price for us and for the greatest value for life. Is it He we want or filthy lucre?

People put their money where their heart is and money is a tyrant, ruling our lives. Amos warns against it, greed, exploitation, corruption and **"those who buy up the poor for money"** (Amos 8:6)

He warns those who refuse to listen, how the comfortable will be afflicted and the afflicted will be comforted. **How are we doing? "Never will I forget a single thing you have done"** (Amos 8:7).

God considers all, even the poor and oppressed and will raise them up, He **"who is the Lord, our God, who has risen on high to his throne?"** (Ps. 112:5). Such a God is deserving of praise.

Ps.112 is a *hallel* (praise) psalm: **"Praise the Lord, who raises the poor"** (Ps. 112:1,7). He is a great God **"above the heavens"** (Ps. 112:4), **"from the dungheap he raises the poor"** Ps. 112:7).

We human beings are separated from God by sin. Jesus Christ is the **"only mediator between God and mankind"** (1 Tim.2:5), who can bring us together and unite us with one another.

Paul, **"herald and apostle"** (1 Tim.2:7), in giving spiritual direction, expresses social concerns, praying for good government, peace and **"prayers be offered for everyone to God"** (1 Tim.2:1).

The Gospel shows a crafty steward praised **"for his astuteness"** (Lk:16:8). Possibly he exploited his fellowmen making personal profits and now ingratiates himself with a quick reduction. He uses **"tainted money to win friends"**(Lk. 16:9). Hopefully if all else fails, friends will help and intercede.

Basic elements are used to serve a higher cause. Jesus, however is clear, if you cannot be trusted with basics **"who will trust you with genuine riches?"** (Lk:16:11). Be sure of what you want most. **"You cannot be the slave of both God and of money"** (Lk:16:13).

Scripture: Read the *Gospel* (Lk. 16:1-13) and reflect upon the parable of the unjust steward.

Liturgy: Besides moments for confessing our sins in the liturgy, collections are taken up for the poor. **How much do you contribute or put money in the boxes for the poor and the needy?**

Doctrine: Reflect upon the Church's social teaching on justice and exploitation.

Witness: Consider ways of helping or serving someone you know or may accost in need.

FOR THE CHILDREN:

Read and discuss with the children the Gospel of the day. Ponder the parable of Jesus.

Is there a moment at Mass when we think of the poor make an offering for them?

Share with the children Jesus' love for the poor and the needy, and how we can serve them too.

Make a resolution to do something for someone who needs help.

FOR TEENAGERS (Shared Christian Praxis)

What does poor and oppressed mean to you? What is exploitation?

What are your experiences of oppression and exploitation? What have you done?

Discuss the Church's social teachings on justice, more specifically on exploitation.

How would you describe yourself and the Church's involvement with the poor and needy?

Any suggestions on how you and the Church as a whole, to be more Christ-like in serving the poor?

RCIA: CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (CCC)

"How can we not recognize Lazarus, the hungry beggar in the parable (Lk.17:19-31), in the multitude of human beings without bread, a roof or a place to stay? How can we fail to hear Jesus: "As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (Mt.25:45)." (CCC.2463).

LIFE EXPERIENCE

Sam Harris, in his book "The End of Faith," says "the world is blazing with bad ideas." (i) We see it all around. What would the prophet Amos say if he saw what is happening today? In South Africa, those at the top of government are more concerned for themselves than for those at the bottom. They endorse enormous increments in their salaries while the workers have not been paid for months. Tax monies seem to flow into their rich private homes and cars rather than to the poor, homeless and starving. What would Amos say? Surely, he would call for sacrifice on the part of the privileged classes. Morally, one is entitled to personal comfort but should it be at the expense and exploitation of your neighbour's life?

I am reminded of the story of a rich man, called Kelly. He accumulated much wealth and property. Many were the victims of his exploitation. Before he died, he built a beautiful chapel. People call it 'Kelly's fire-escape.'

(i) HARRIS Sam. "The End of Faith". W.W. Norton & Company. New York, USA. 2005. p.224.

LITTLE ANGELINA

There are even games of exploitation such as monopoly. Angelina was playing with her little friends and one of them lost all her money and property. She could not accept that she was out of the game. Being upset, she kicked the table and jumbled up the game. Amidst the confusion, Angelina's boast was, "I've got the money." One could see what counted most for her. She won, her friend lost. Will Angelina become more aware of her friend than money, even if it is only a game?

"Children are offsprings of the living gods" (i) says Plato, which, God or mammon?

(i) PLATO: Timaeus. 24d. Transl. by Desmond Lee & T.K. Johansen. Penguin Classics, London, England. 1977. p.15.

IMPORTANT WORD: How good was the unjust steward?

The affluent and astute steward had a change of heart when he realized he had to face judgement. He was denounced for certain abuses and malpractices, possibly exploitation of his fellowmen. He wisely re-adjusted himself in terms of his fellowmen and saw them as more important to his redemption than money. What seems to have confirmed his exploitation of others, is the manner in which he reduces the fees of his master's debtors, seemingly like the tax-collectors of his time, who were making personal profit out of their master's business. In order to ingratiate himself with those he exploited, he reduces the exorbitant surcharges asking them to simply pay the basic debt. In this sense, the master commends him, not for robbing him but for the sacrifices he made in no longer exploiting his neighbours and learning to work with them and to depend on them.

To react before it is too late, a change of heart, as did the astute steward, will finally reap us, not condemnation but the commendation of God.

Watchword: “**You cannot be slave both of God and of money**” (Lk.16:13)

Hebrew: לא תוכלו עבד את־האלהים ואת הממון

Lo thukhlu ‘avod ‘eth-ha’elohim ve’eth hamamon.

Greek: Ου δυνασθε θεω δουλευειν και μαμωνα.

Oo dunasthe theo douleuein kai mamona.

Latin: **Non potestis Deo servire et mammonae.**

Portuguese: **Não podeis servir a Deus e a Mamom (ou riqueza).**

Spanish: **No podeis servir a Dios y a las riquezas (Mamon).**

French: **Vous ne pouvez pas server a la fois Dieu et l’argent.**

German: **Ihr könnt nicht Gott dienen und dem Mammon.**

Afrikaans: **Julle kan nie God en Mammon dien nie.**

Zulu: **Ningekhonze uNkulunkulu kanye noMamona.**

Xhosa: **Aninako ukukhonza uThixo kwanobutyebi.**

Sotho: **Le ke ke la sebeletsa Modimo le Leruo.**

Irish: **Ni feidir daoibh Dia a riaradh agus an t-airgead.**