

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 25th, 2022

Reading 1 – Amos 6:1a, 4-7

Thus says the LORD the God of hosts:

Woe to the complacent in Zion!

Lying upon beds of ivory,
stretched comfortably on their couches,
they eat lambs taken from the flock,
and calves from the stall!

Improvising to the music of the harp,
like David, they devise their own accompaniment.

They drink wine from bowls
and anoint themselves with the best oils;
yet they are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph!
Therefore, now they shall be the first to go into exile,
and their wanton revelry shall be done away with.

Am 6: 1a, 4-7: As we continue to dive deeper into the book of Amos, we arrive at another portion of the book that displays the prophetic zeal of Amos that Fr. Chuck spoke of last week. As it was mentioned by Fr. Chuck, “One day, he [Amos] realized the restlessness and anger within was God’s way of calling him to speak on God’s behalf. He couldn’t hold in the inner turmoil and began to ‘roar’...”. And in this case, we enter in at a point where his “roaring” focuses on the ones living in luxury who mix their lifestyle with a religious devotion. A devotion that in Amos’s description only provided a false sense of security and self-satisfaction. And by the end of the passage, in Amos’s prophetic words, we can surmise that he believes that this type of formal worship is worthless and is seen as a transgression (Paulist Biblical Commentary, pgs. 819-820).

It is a transgression because as we see in the passage “They...anoint themselves with the best oils; yet they are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph [reference to the northern tribes that were established by Joseph’s kin], not only are they sacra-religiously dining with holy items and partying as if nothing can touch them. They are continuously ignoring to take care of the less fortunate in their midst. And in general, this book argues that in order for ritual worship to be authentic, “[It must be] paired with the attention to God’s ways in the judicial, moral, socio-economic spheres” (Paulist Biblical Commentary, pg.820).

Comments/Questions: Reflecting on the words of this passage today, regarding authentic worship, do you think most church communities are striving to live this out? How so? What could Christian communities do to make sure they are always striving to keep their way of life authentic?

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 146:7, 8-9, 9-10

R. (1b) Praise the Lord, my soul!

Blessed is he who keeps faith forever,
secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets captives free.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

The LORD gives sight to the blind;
the LORD raises up those who were bowed down.
The LORD loves the just;
the LORD protects strangers.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

The fatherless and the widow he sustains,
but the way of the wicked he thwarts.
The LORD shall reign forever;
your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

Reading 2 – 1 Timothy 6:11-16

But you, man of God, pursue righteousness,
devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness.
Compete well for the faith.

Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called
when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses.
I charge you before God, who gives life to all things,
and before Christ Jesus,
who gave testimony under Pontius Pilate for the noble confession,
to keep the commandment without stain or reproach
until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ
that the blessed and only ruler
will make manifest at the proper time,
the King of kings and Lord of lords,
who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light,
and whom no human being has seen or can see.
To him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

1 Timothy 6:11-16 – 1 Timothy along with 2 Timothy and Titus are referred to as the “Pastoral Letters.” They deal with how to handle different situations pastorally. Paul is the suggested author, but scholars have found certain discrepancies that led them to conclude that, the author(s) were not Paul himself but people of Pauline thought, who lived near the start of the second century CE. But, Paul’s authorship does not diminish the significance of these letters. The Pastoral Letters helped to encourage second generation Christian families to stay rooted in the Pauline tradition. The author(s) actually do a fantastic job of presenting the Gospel message in lieu of new and challenging circumstances. 1 Timothy in particular helps to show

how the church was structured and all the different roles that leaders played. Timothy was a trusted leader of Paul and was helping lead the church in Ephesus. Scholars do believe this was the historical place where this letter is addressed.

In our reading today we are in the last parts of the letter to 1 Timothy. Here the author is urging Timothy, to stay true to his vocation as a pastor, to be a person of virtue and integrity. By fulfilling this task Timothy gains eternal life with Jesus, who is “King of kings, Lord of lords, who alone has immortality...” Peter Morello brought up a very important part when reading the Pastoral Letters. Even though the letters are addressed to specific people the intent of the letter was to be addressed to all its readers. So, the author is speaking to all of us with the same encouragement as he is to Timothy.

Comments/Questions: When the author tells Timothy to “Compete well for the faith” he is essentially telling Timothy to *fight* for his faith. The Greek translation of this word means to maintain composure during difficult situations. This makes me think of sports. The most successful athletes know how to maintain this composure throughout difficult situations. My question is are there any redeeming qualities in the sports culture that could give us encouragement like the author of 1 Timothy encourages Timothy?

Gospel – Luke 16:19-31

Jesus said to the Pharisees:

"There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day.

And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table.

Dogs even used to come and lick his sores.

When the poor man died,

he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham.

The rich man also died and was buried,

and from the netherworld, where he was in torment,

he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off

and Lazarus at his side.

And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me.

Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.'

Abraham replied,

'My child, remember that you received

what was good during your lifetime

while Lazarus likewise received what was bad;

but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented.

Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established

to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go

from our side to yours or from your side to ours.'

He said, 'Then I beg you, father,
send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers,
so that he may warn them,
lest they too come to this place of torment.'
But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets.
Let them listen to them.'
He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham,
but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'
Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets,
neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'"

Luke 16:19-31. As Jesus journeys to Jerusalem, he attracts large crowds with a vision of God's Kingdom, but he also draws the ire of the Pharisees and Scribes, because he demonstrates how these so-called religious leaders do not practice what they preach. They pick and choose how they will live according to the covenant and the law, and when Jesus offers a contrary message to theirs, they sneer at him and look for ways to make him look bad in the eyes of the people. He points out that they are hypocritical lovers of money and seek to hang on to their positions of honor and prestige—the very opposite of the message they are supposed to preach and demonstrate with their lives. The parable that he tells in today's passage reiterates the problem that goes back to the time of the prophets such as Amos in the 8th Century BCE: Living in right relationship with God means sharing wealth and caring for the poor and those who are tossed aside as worthless. This is where the parable about a rich man and a poor beggar named Lazarus (Greek translation of Eliezer which means My God helps me.) The rich man is oblivious to the beggar who sits outside his gate longing to be fed with the food dropped from the rich man's table. He obviously is rendered unclean by the wealthy diners, because he is among dogs who lick his sores. In addition to the other lessons the parable teaches, Luke reveals his "great reversal" theme, when, upon death, the two men end up in a shift of status: Lazarus goes to rest in the "bosom of Abraham" and the rich man goes to hades (a shadowy form of existence in the dust of the earth). Even after death the rich man, who is used to giving commands, wants Abraham to direct Lazarus to dip his finger in water to relieve the languishing he experiences amidst the flames. Abraham, who is the father of all Jews tells him this isn't possible, because of the gap that keeps the two states of being permanently separated. He reminds the rich man that he was well off during his life, while Lazarus lived a life of squalor and was unable to help himself. When the rich man, who cares about his five brothers, now wants Lazarus to go to his father's house and warn them. Abraham replies, "They have Moses and the prophets." If they aren't listening to them, then neither will they be persuaded to change their style of life even if a now-risen-from-the-dead person appears to them.

Comments/Questions: We belong to a Church where upon becoming pope, Francis almost immediately (after asking us to pray for him), started demonstrating what it means to care about the marginalized and the forgotten “rejects” of the world— whoever that might be for us Catholics: the prisoners, some of whom were Muslims whose feet he washed on his first Holy Thursday; the street people for whom he set up showers and barbers near the Vatican and invited them to meals; the marginalized whom he refused to judge if they are people of good will; the people of different religions with whom he prays in special gatherings; the indigenous people (such as those in Canada) who have been wounded by Church workers. In one of his first Christmas messages with the Cardinals, he told them to get out of their offices and take upon themselves the “smell of the sheep” they are called to serve— and (unlike the rich man in the parable) to stop paying so much attention to their high-priced robes. On September 20th, our Archdiocese had the bishop of El Paso speak on immigration based on his experiences at the Southern Border. How do we apply this parable to our lives?