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25th Sunday in Ordinary Time - 18 September 2022

Joe Tedesco

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18 September 2022

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction

Money is an entity like no other. The way we acquire and use it directly reflects what we truly value. All of us are called to use our material means to build a world in keeping with God's justice and love.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came into this world in poverty.
Lord, have mercy.

You made us rich out of your poverty.
Christ, have mercy.

You draw us into eternal life.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect

The oration

O God, who founded all the commands of your sacred Law
upon love of you and of our neighbor,
grant that, by keeping your precepts,
we may merit to attain eternal life.

This prayer is something of a new creation, yet with ancient antecedents. It is a combination of two prayers, one from sixth century Rome, the other from a similar period of worship in Spain. The meaning itself, however, is clear. The oration gathers together the different versions of Jesus' commandment to love God and neighbour. Living out the divine precepts, themselves a gift from God, leads to gaining eternal life. From the range of ways this is reflected in the broad sweep of collect prayers it can be seen that the great commandment itself is a reflection of God's truth, justice and provident governance. Further, obedience to the divine precepts, which affects each individual, is an ecclesial action, associated with peace

and harmony in the community, worship, self-denial, fasting, moderation and receiving God's gifts in the present and in eternity. (Gerard Moore)

First Reading

Amos 8:4–7

Amos speaks out against those who have gained their wealth at the expense of the poor and through injustice. Amos reminds them that the Lord never forgets such deeds.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 112:1-2, 4-8. R. cf. vv. 1,7

Praise the Lord, who lifts up the poor.

God sits high above any temporal authority or earthly matters. Yet nothing and no one is too small for God who lifts the lowly to places of royalty.

Second Reading

1 Timothy 2:1–8

Paul encourages the community to pray for all people, whether they are Christian or not, for God desires salvation for all. Such prayer serves to create peaceable lives and is a witness to Jesus' mediating power.

Gospel Reading

Luke 16:1–13 or Luke 16:10–13

The longer form of the Gospel reading features a dishonest steward who is held up as a model of shrewdness. Jesus points out that we who are children of light can learn even from those who are children of the world. The shorter form highlights the concluding verses which reminds listeners that there is a difference between the two types of people. Those who are followers of Christ cannot serve money like those who are followers of worldly ways.

Reflection

Money and Christianity, indeed, religious activity and material wealth in general are not always comfortable bedfellows. The Christian tradition, like many other religious expressions, recognises that money is one of, if not the most, distracting lures of the human psyche, leading us away from true devotion and from virtuous lives. If we take one line from our Gospel reading, we see this well stated, you cannot serve

God and wealth. Jesus declares it plainly, you must 'be devoted to one and despise the other' (Lk 16:13). With that in mind, it is not surprising that many Christian movements and religious orders have been built on forms of asceticism where material goods of most kinds are seen as suspect and laid aside so that one can attend to God alone.

This thinking is also the grounds for many accusatorial barbs made toward the Church where she is seen to be concerned with wealth. In some people's minds, the Church's displays of opulence in its architecture or artifacts mark it as hypocritical. Another occasion of criticism might be when a Christian cause asks for money, either directly or indirectly. Such situations might be thought of as occasions for scandal, especially among those who feel that Christianity should be concerned with 'spiritual matters' alone. Of course, the issue with this logic points to the direction that today's readings are going.

There is no such thing as a purely 'spiritual concern' above and entirely separate from our material dimensions. Yes, there is a final place for all of us that is 'supernatural' in the sense that it builds upon and then goes beyond our material experience, but the very truth of Christ is that God is working in, through and with creation with all its 'materialness'.

Of course, some of the concerns that surround Church and money should be given due attention. There have been and still are situations where genuine corruption is at play or where material concerns of the Church or smaller church communities have overtaken their true calling to be the 'salt of the earth' and a 'light to the world'. That is a true warning to be heeded. The second reading gives us sound teaching in that direction.

Amos was a prophet sent by God to bring a stern teaching to the northern kingdom of Israel. At the time, Israel had made accommodations with neighbours holding off adversarial powers and the kingdom was enjoying a period of relative stability and wealth. More accurately, it was only a section of the community that was enjoying the wealth. The elite were enjoying the freedom to practice all the public religious rituals with pomp and show. The poor, on the other hand, were as destitute as ever. Worse, as the particular reading used this week indicates, the money of the wealthy elite was being created through immoral and unjust dealings. It was exploitative and contrary to the very religious practices they were so proudly performing.

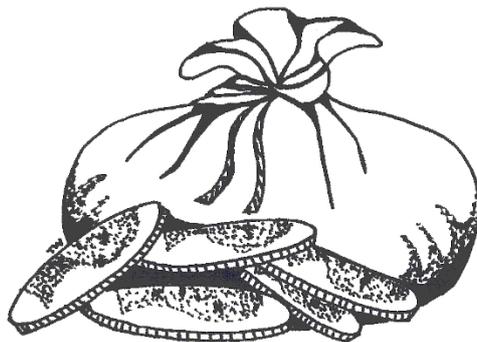
Earlier in Amos we see the prophet speak of the Israelite's ostensive religious activity and how God rejects it (e.g. 5:18-24). Even though their religious activity looked beautiful and pleasing, it is empty of what matters to God – justice and devotion to the Lord. Those devoted to wealth will be shown up in how they create and use their wealth. Those devoted to God will, likewise, be recognisable in how they create and use their wealth. Money itself is not the target of Amos' prophecies, it is the people who, though they happen to be in a blessed position, refuse to act with love and justice.

The point of all this is not that money is inherently evil however, as pointed out above, we should be suspicious of it. Luke's Gospel in particular warns of the

dangers that the lure of wealth can have. It is the 'riches and pleasures of life' that is mentioned as one of the 'thorns' that chokes a growing faith (8:14). Luke also uses the illustration of the rich fool who stored treasures for himself instead of being 'rich toward God' (12:13-21). That caution is duly noted. Nevertheless, especially if we take in the longer form of the Gospel reading, Jesus nuances such teaching on wealth adding that there is right dealing with money that provides an important expression of our character. Money is, after all, empty in itself. It is a symbol of something. It is a symbol of worth that we use to exchange for other things of worth.

Money illustrates our true selves and what we truly value. It is not an end in itself. If we see it as such, then we are surely becoming enslaved by it – it will be our master. Money is a window into our true natures, where our trust lies and what sort of person we are and what power we serve. Used well, morally and to serve our world, it can reflect God's will that calls all creation to justice and fullness of life. Used selfishly, for its own sake and despite our world's needs, it is reflection of evil which is counter to the creative force of God.

Some are called to a genuine life of chosen poverty, a form of devotion that reminds us that all things are worthless but for the love of God. Most of us will not be called to live in that mode, but all of us are being taught that what we do with whatever we have, large or small, can be used to build up the kingdom of God or destroy it. God is to be our master and so anything, including money, is called to serve the true master. How we use it, how we acquire it and, most importantly, how it is shared can be done rightly or can be done wrongly.



*If you cannot be trusted
with money, who will trust
you with genuine riches?*

Lk 16:11

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

It is God who lifts up the poor, so in our spiritual poverty let us offer our needs and the needs of the world.

Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Church, especially Pope Francis. May they take inspiration from the Gospel today and be images of the Mercy of God in our world in all that they say and do particularly during the work of the Plenary Council and the Synod of 2023.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all political and economic leaders of the world in government and corporate bodies. May they open themselves to the wisdom of God that shows that mercy is more important than power or wealth and that the world we live in must be cared for with compassion.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who suffer illness and starvation because of the global mismanagement of food distribution. May they be healed and fed through the agencies that truly work for the poor in our world and may our community continue to support those agencies with generous contributions.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all gathered here that we may open ourselves to God's word and be more forgiving and merciful in the way that we live our lives.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all people who have died through injustice and lack of mercy. May they truly find their place in the perfection of God's love.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Merciful God, we know that your mercy and compassion has no bounds and so we present these petitions confident that they will be answered according to your will through the power of the Spirit and in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK	AOVNG	GA	CWB	CWBII
Be thou my vision	9					733	455
Christ is made the sure foundation					482	640	
Draw near and take the body of the Lord						668	482
Forgive our sins as we forgive						680	120
For the fruits of this creation					426		488
For the healing of the nations					513		
For the journey			128			128	
Gift of finest wheat					191	685	
Holy God, we praise your name		129			411	710	504
Lord, be my vision						733	
Lord, whose love in humble service						741	551
Praise, my soul, the king of heaven	78					789	588
Praise to the Lord		132				792	586
Seek ye first	48				456		594
The Church of Christ in every age						818	613
The Beatitudes					489	817	456
The cry of the poor	83				36		618
The Summons				149			645
What does the Lord require?							642

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 112: *Praise the Lord who lifts up the poor/Alleluia!*

	CWB	JOBC	LPC
Psalm 112	423	pg. 94	pg. 146

Music selections by Michael Mangan

You are my shepherd (FWS) *Based on Ps 22/23* [Gifts, Communion]