

Love for the Poor



I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Am 6:1a,4-7)

Relaxing

¹Ah! People who are **complacent** in Zion,
⁴Those who lie on beds of ivory,/ and lounge
upon their couches;/
Feasting

Eating lambs taken from the flock,/ and calves
from the stall;/
Playing music

⁵Who improvise to the music of the harp,/
composing on musical instruments like David,/
Drinking

⁶Who drink wine from bowls,/
Anointing (perfuming)
and anoint themselves with the best oils,/
Complacency

but are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph;/
Punishment

⁷Therefore, now they shall be the first to go into
exile,/ and the carousing of those who lounged
shall cease.

THE FOCUS: Complacency

COMMENTARY

• In v. 1 Amos speaks on behalf of God regarding the social situation of Israel. He warns the unconcerned in Zion (Jerusalem!). They

don't care to read the "signs of the times."

- vv.4-7 indicate what the complacent are doing. They are enjoying life. They live in comfort. They eat and drink to fill up their stomach. They listen to music. They pour out unto their bodies expensive oils (perfumes).
- They are callous. They are not affected by the fate of Joseph (tribe of Israel, Ephraim and Manasseh).
- They continue doing their own thing.
- They don't show concern to those who are affected by disaster (invasion, destruction).
- Because of their complacency, they will be punished. Their punishment is declared in parallel form: first to go to exile // wanton revelry to be done away with.
- *Exile* is the bodily removal of the complacent from their comfort zones to a place where there will be no more excessive revelry.

REFLECTIONS

Amos, the prophet of social justice, warns against the same people who live in luxury in spite of the widespread poverty and threat to the well-being of the majority.

God does not like this kind of people. They are complacent. Complacent people are those who think everything is ok, even if it is not.

They close their ears to the “cry of the poor.”

They close their eyes to the “signs of the times.”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps146:7, 8-9, 9-10)

PRAISE THE LORD, MY SOUL!

SECOND READING (1 Tim 6:11-16)

Paul's Imperatives

^{11*} But you, man of God, avoid all this. Instead, **pursue righteousness**, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. ¹²Compete 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.

¹³I charge [you] before God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus, who gave testimony under Pontius Pilate for the noble confession, ¹⁴to **keep the commandment** without stain or reproach until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ

Purpose of keeping the commandment

¹⁵that the blessed and only ruler will make manifest at the proper time, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, and whom no human being has seen or can see.

Doxology

To him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

THE FOCUS: Pursuing Righteousness, etc. (not being complacent)

COMMENTARY

- In v.11, Paul addresses Timothy, the church leader, as man of God.
- Paul's imperatives are the following: Pursue righteousness... (v.11); Compete well... (v.12); lay hold... (v.12); keep the commandment (v.14);
- V.15 gives the reason for pursuing righteousness... and keeping the commandment always: God will reveal the King of kings...

REFLECTIONS

Paul is not addressing an ordinary man but a man of responsibility whom he considers man of God.

Though man of God, Timothy is exhorted to pursue righteousness (*to be fair and just, to align himself with God*), devotion (*passion for God, for what is ideal and true*), faith (*in Christ*), love (*charity*), patience (*endurance*) and gentleness (*meek and mild*). Timothy, though an authority himself, has a higher authority (Paul) to look up to for advice.

Timothy has to keep the commandment without fail. He should lead a blameless life until the second coming of Christ.

GOSPEL READING (Lk 16:19-31)

The rich man and the poor man while on earth

¹⁹“There was a **rich man*** who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. (*Really rich, can afford to be well-dressed, well-fed, has a good appetite, always feasting, enjoying clothing and satisfying his taste buds.*) ²⁰And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, (*sick with skin disease*), ²¹who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps (*like a madman, no dignity*) that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. (*Animals seem to have compassion on him. They console him. Not a very good sight.*)

The poor man and the rich man in life after

²²When the poor man died, (*as expected, he died of hunger and sickness*), he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The **rich man** also died and was buried, ²³and from the netherworld, (*hell, under the earth*), where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. (*We*

may wonder why the poor man automatically went to heaven and the rich man to hell. What did they do to deserve their respective destinies? It is a matter of discernment and reflection. We cannot investigate. The text just narrates what happens and does not make judgment. The judgment is reserved to the discerning reader.)

The rich man in hell demanding Abraham

²⁴And 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.’ (The rich man thinks he is still in command no matter what. He is already in hell, yet he is commanding Abraham to do something. He has guts, the gall to ask Lazarus to cool his tongue with a drop of water. Lazarus was never his servant. He was nobody when he was somebody, bloating his body.)

Reversal of fate

^{25j}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. (This is the main point of the story, the reversal of fate. What kind of doctrine is this? We must search its meaning. It may be simplistic as it is stated here. We are hereby led to discern the meaning of this enigmatic teaching. The whole story tells us that we should not neglect the poor. We have no right to spend, to enjoy so much just for ourselves without considering the poor. The text is a warning to those who are insensitive to the needs of the poor. The text gives a picture of what will happen to them in the life after.)

The impossibility of his demand

²⁶Moreover, 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.’ (In the life after, there will be no more bargaining, no more

commutation of punishment, no more pleading, protesting. The end is end.)

The rich man still demanding / commanding

²⁷He said, ‘Then I beg you, father, send him to my father’s house, ²⁸for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.’ (Makulit pa rin. This is typical of a brat who deserves to go to hell because he wants to dictate according to his terms. V.28 informs us of his brothers. They are of the same breed. What kind of upbringing did they have? A failure of their parents? They were never taught to love, to be considerate to the less fortunate, to the destitute. Hell is described as a place of torment.)

Abraham’s wisdom

²⁹But Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.’ (Moses represents the Torah (law, instruction); the prophets represent the interpretation of the Torah.)

The rich man (makulit) nags

^{30*}He said, ‘Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ (The rich man reveals his ignorance to the system of God. He never learned because he was always busy eating and drinking and donning the latest fashion. He learned pleasure based on externals, looks and appearances and tastes. He was malnourished spiritually. He does not know his ‘catechism.’)

Abraham’s firmness

^{31k}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.’”

(Abraham is presented as a firm person, knowing what to do. You cannot play games with him. Abraham affirms that Moses and the prophets are more effective than the dead coming to life. Let the dead be dead. Don’t disturb them. You cannot do anything to those who have callous hearts and minds. Lazarus’

soul/spirit is already enjoying in heaven.)

THE FOCUS: The Rich Man’s Predicament

REFLECTIONS

The Gospel Reading is addressed to those who think only of themselves and who have no compassion for the poor.

Failure to listen to God is failure to love the poor.

If we don’t have any time, place, and budget for the poor, it means that we have failed to listen to God.

Those who are not sensitive to the needs of the poor have no place in heaven.

II. TYING THE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading teaches that complacency is not an ideal state of life.

The Second Reading teaches us that we should not be complacent, but pursue righteousness, love for the poor and keep the commandments.

The Gospel Reading teaches us to be compassionate to the poor, not complacent.

How to develop your sharing/homily

Do you like going to parties? Do you frequently take meals at expensive restaurants? There is nothing wrong about throwing parties or treating visitors to fine dining restaurants.

The readings in the liturgy warn us of excessive partying without considering the needs of the poor.

It is being too insensitive to them as if they do not exist at all, and what matters is only their appetite.

The prophet Amos protests against the rich who live in luxury and pleasure.

They sleep on first class couches and beds.

They devour big slices of meat and gulp expensive wines.

They have the best music players and things in life.

He warns them of their impending destruction because of their complacency.

(Malapit nang matapos ang mga masasayang araw nila) Their days are counted.

The Gospel equally condemns complacency.

The rich man goes to hell because of complacency. He is indifferent to the plight of the poor. He is unconscientized (*Hindi mulat*).

It is a no no to God to enjoy God’s blessings without sharing them with the poor.

We can rationalize, they too should work. We are fortunate because we work hard, we take care of our belongings.

This is not the point. The poor will always be with us, even if they work very hard because of injustices.

Fortunes will be reversed in the life after, if we do not act now.

The Second Reading teaches us indirectly not to be complacent.

In a more positive way, St. Paul exhorts us, not only Timothy, to pursue righteousness which should eradicate complacency.

Righteousness is the drive to do what is right.

It is setting aside some of my comfort and sharing it with the poor.

Correct behavior (gentleness) is an acceptable Christian behavior, not complacency.

St. Paul exhorts us to keep the commandments without reproach (fault), with sincerity.

Today’s readings are strongly against too much partying.

The rich must be taught right from childhood human and Christian values like love for the poor.

Our rich churchgoers must be taught how to channel some of their resources to the Poor Fund of the church (for the medical, feeding and scholarship programs).

Christians must be taught that there is joy and satisfaction in giving.

The eucharist is a banquet offered to us, rich and poor alike, by the Lord. It is sharing of life where no one is rich or poor.

Here in the eucharist, the poor are not excluded.

Jesus in his word and sacrament is the one who can satisfy our hunger and thirst, not what the world offers.

The eucharist is a sacrament of salvation to save the poor.

Those who are entitled to receive communion are the ones who answer the call of God, those who are not complacent, those who don't take the poor for granted, those who have a heart for the destitute. The eucharist is a sacrament of justice and salvation for the just.

-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Today is National Seafarer's Day
2. Do you reach out to some families of the OFW's and Seafarers who are left here in the Philippines?
3. Many exclusive schools now expose their students to slum areas to wake in them the sense of justice and compassion for the less fortunate. (HM)