

Twenty-Fifth Sunday day in Ordinary Time C/2016

The readings of this Sunday talk about the importance of social justice. They show that the Kingdom of God requires fairness in the handling of human business. They invite us to live in the spirit of fairness and accountability in our business.

The first reading describes, through the mouth of the Prophet Amos, God's condemnation of those who take advantage of the poor and the needy. It also announces God's justice, especially with regard to injustice and exploitation of the weak.

What is behind this text is the idea that God identifies with the poor and the needy. There is also the idea that any harm or good done to the needy is done to God. The last idea is related to the truth that God is just in his judgment.

This text helps us understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus praises the astuteness of the dishonest manager. First of all, the Gospel speaks of a manager who was reported to his master as squandering his property. It also speaks of the reaction of the master who wanted to get rid of the manager. Then, it reports the astuteness of the manager who wanted to gain the friendship of the creditors of his master once his job was lost.

After that, the Gospel reports the statement of Jesus about the prudence of the children of this world and his invitation to make friends with our wealth so that those may welcome us in the eternal dwellings.

In the end, the Gospel reports the declaration of Jesus, namely that those who are trustworthy in small things will be trustworthy in great ones as well as those who are dishonest in the small things will be dishonest in great ones. Finally, the Gospel reports the speech of Jesus about the impossibility of serving two masters at the same time, namely God and money.

What do we learn from today's Gospel? Today I want to talk about cleverness in handling the matters of God. What do I mean by that? Let me explain by referring to an experience of life. In fact, when I was student, one of the principles I learned from the lecture on domestic economy was that it is better to delay an immediate pleasure for a bigger one later.

For instance, if someone has \$10,000 and spends it all once at the renewal of his wardrobe or furniture, all his money is gone as in smoke. But, if he invests it in some business, he can gain more later. This principle is present in the head of the manager Jesus is talking about in the Gospel.

In fact, as the manager realized that he was about to lose his job, he resolved to make a deal with the debtors of his master. The main reason for acting so is that once the job is lost, they might treat him kindly. In truth, what he does is to falsify the entries in the account book of the business so that the debtors pay less than what they owe. In that sense, he shows himself generous with the money of his boss, but for the profit he wants to reap later.

Is there any reason why, Jesus is telling this story? Yes. First, Jesus wants us to realize that we live in a situation of urgency. Therefore, we have to make an immediate decision and without delay for our eternal salvation. Like the manager who renounced an immediate profit he would have had with the money from the debts of his master in

order to build good relationships for the future, so shall we be inventive and prudent in matters of our salvation!

In other words, the astuteness of the manager is an appeal that we too must be clever in dealing with the things of our salvation. That is why we have to understand that the master's praise of the manager is not an appreciation of his dishonesty, but rather an admiration of his cleverness in building relationships that will help him later. That is what we have to do also for our eternal salvation.

Second, Jesus wants us to realize that we have to live in solidarity with our fellow humans. In fact, God has blessed us differently so that some of us are better off than others. If that is true, then, what we possess is just God's gift. Because it is so, we have to open our hearts to the less fortunate and the needy. Moreover, we have to use our material goods for charity and for building friendships with those who have nothing. In that perspective, when the rich person helps the poor in this world, he builds a treasure in heaven. That is why Jesus says, "make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth.

Does this statement mean that Jesus is against material possessions or money? No; what is at stake is the truth that we should not live selfishly, but in solidarity with our fellows, in doing good to them. This is so true that we have been grateful to many friends and benefactors who have provided with funds to support churches, schools, hospitals, people in need, etc. Their generosity has made a difference in the church and in the life of many people in the world. That is why money creates responsibility toward the less fortunate and the needy.

Third, Jesus wants that we give the best of ourselves in every task we undertake. Why? Because whoever is trustworthy or dishonest in small things will be also trustworthy or dishonest in great things. In other words, the way we fulfill a small task is the best proof of our fitness or unfitness to be trusted with a bigger task. That is why what is true for human business is also true for eternal life. If that is true, then, it means that what we get in heaven depends on how we use the things of this world.

Finally, Jesus wants us to realize that we have to make a choice of serving his Father and not our money or possessions. That is why, when he says that "No servant can serve two masters", he is inviting us to make God our guiding principle whenever we handle money or do business.

Let us, then, pray especially for businessmen so that they put human relationships and needs above economic interests. Let us pray for all the members of our Parish community that we live in solidarity with one other. Let us pray for those who govern us that God may help them to guide us to a shining tomorrow and also that all of us may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity, in a way that is pleasing to God. May God bless you all!

Amos 8: 4-7; 1 Tim 2: 1-8; Luke 16: 1-13



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Contact: www.mbala.org

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