

Homily of Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, 2025

Amos 6:1a, 4-7; Psalm 146:7-10; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; Luke 16:19-31

This homily is a continuation of last week's homily. About 750 B.C., Amos denounced the rich and the leaders in Israel who in their extravagant life of luxury oppressed and neglected the suffering poor: "Those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge upon their couches; eating lambs taken from the flock, and calves from the stall; ... who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the best oils, but are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph" (Amos 4:6-7).

The neglect of the poor by the rich and the leaders was not different during the time of Jesus, which was why Jesus gave the parable of the rich man and Lazarus: "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" (Luke 16:19-21).

The rich man did nothing wrong for being rich. However, while he was rich materially, he was spiritually impoverished. His sins were: gluttony ("dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day"), spiritual blindness, and lack of compassion ("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"). While the rich man did not show compassion to Lazarus, the rich man's dogs did. The dogs, ordinarily, would have barked and driven Lazarus away from their master's gate. Instead, the dogs showed him compassion by licking his sores.

The neglect of the poor, despite the world's rich resources, may be worse in our time than it was during the time of Amos and the time of Jesus. Blind eyes are turned on the plight of poor countries. Rather, high interest loans and all kinds of Greek gifts are offered to them instead of assisting in their development. Multinational companies impoverish the poor countries further by syphoning their natural resources and leaving them in ruins. The companies declare billions of dollars of profits each year on the ruins of the exploited countries. Some billionaires, companies, and countries make profits from the on-going conflicts and wars around the world. That is why we are in cycles of conflicts, violence, and wars with no end in sight.

It is a fact that some corrupt rulers wine and dine sumptuously and excessively and do not care about the suffering poor in their countries. The funds that should have been used for the benefit of the poor are stolen and spent on life of vanity.

How are the poor neighborhoods and people who look different treated in the distribution of rights, privileges, justice, and allocation of goods and services?

The effects of leadership are like mountaintop spring water that flows down to the people for consumption. If it is poisoned at its source, the people cannot escape the

poisonous effects. The corrupt rulers “are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph” (Amos 6:6). Last Sunday, God says, “Never will I forget a thing they have done!” (Amos 4:7).

There is a story of a poor widow who went to a rich man in her village and requested for financial help to bury her husband. The rich man, who had so many plots of land, demanded the widow to forfeit to him the only piece of land that belonged to her and her children in order to receive the financial help she needed. There are many heart wrenching stories of abuse and exploitation of the weak and the needy in exchange for some favor.

Last Sunday, St. Paul instructed us to pray for those in authority. There is every reason to take St. Paul’s prayer invitation seriously.

We may not be among the heartless rich people, or among the corrupt political, judicial, and economic leaders, but we are all called to be compassionate and caring; to open our eyes and see the ‘Lazarus’ lying at our doors; and to open our hearts to help them. Do we check on our neighbor whom we have not seen for a while? Do we check on someone whom we have not seen in the church for a while? Do we reach out to help someone we notice that needs help? Do we turn blind eyes?

I most sincerely thank all who participate in the archdiocese’s and our parish’s charity ministries to the sick, needy, and the homebound. May God bless you all in this present age and on the last day, may Jesus welcome us with these words, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me” (Matthew 25:34-36). Amen.

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