

“Thus, says the LORD the God of hosts: Woe to the complacent in Zion! They are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph! Therefore, they shall be the first to go into exile, and their wanton revelry shall be done away with.” Words from our 1<sup>st</sup> reading today from the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the prophet Amos – sisters and brothers, may the Lord give to you his peace and his joy.

There was a gentleman who was travelling south on a business trip, and upon settling into the hotel in Miami, sent a cordial check-in email to his wife who was due to join him soon afterwards on vacation. But because he mistyped the email address, a poor grieving widow who just came back home from the funeral of her husband instead received this troubling email message: “Hi honey – just arrived... I’m busy making preparations for your arrival tomorrow. See you soon. Your loving husband. P.S. Boy is it hot down here!”

Having heard the entirety of the Gospel story, we know where the rich man ended up after his life on earth had passed. All the same, I would like for us to withhold our judgment of him and put ourselves into the shoes of Jesus’ contemporary audience as we are introduced to the rich man for the first time. If we do so, we will be hard pressed to find anything particularly wrong with him: is there anything morally wrong with wearing fine clothes, like a suit coat and tie or a fine dress with jewelry? No, there is nothing wrong with dressing up. Is there anything morally wrong with going out to eat at a nice restaurant like Russell’s for a meal? No – that’s fine.

What about looking out for your family members – that’s a good thing right? Certainly, the rich man wanted to make sure his brothers and family members were safe and sound, free from such torment themselves. Given that the poor man Lazarus had sores and open wounds and was living amongst the dogs - and we should clarify that these are “wild” dogs - Lazarus would have been considered ritually unclean. Point being, we can tell that the rich man was attentive to the proscriptions of the law of his Jewish faith, for he wouldn’t have been able to come to worship at synagogue then if he had in fact associated with Lazarus. And finally, Abraham acknowledged that God had indeed blessed the rich man’s life – “you received what was good during your lifetime,” the Scriptures say. So, the logical question that remains is: if he was in fact a good person, a family man, who was trying to live a faithful and moral life and was blessed by God, then why should he have to suffer so? That he went to the netherworld at his passing to suffer torment would have been a *shocking* conclusion to the Jewish audience that Jesus was addressing. What about us? We didn’t do anything wrong and worked hard for what we have. We’re good people too, aren’t we? Given our own similarities to the rich man, we also might come to sympathize with the rich man’s position and his rather unfair outcome.

But Jesus, and the prophet Amos too, are reminding us, indeed challenging us, to the fact that our own salvation is wrapped up together in the salvation and welfare of all. The problem for Amos was not so much that there were rich people in Ancient Israel but that they were totally complacent. He says, “they were not made ill by the collapse of Joseph.” They were unmoved.

They didn't care about others but were concerned only about keeping themselves comfortable and happy. That was the same problem for the rich man of the Gospel as he ignored the troubles of Lazarus, and made no effort to show any concern for the welfare of Lazarus, even after his death. It's not that these people did anything wrong, they were good people... It's what they failed to do, it's what they didn't do for others, that got them into trouble.

When we prepare for Mass, we pray the Confiteor, saying: I confess to almighty God and to you my brothers and sisters that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts, in my words, in what I have done and *in what I have failed to do*... What we fail to do for the sake of others around us are called sins of omission. The sins of omission are often the most dangerous sins because of how they go under the radar. In our concern for our own goods, we put off, we forget, we ignore, we become blind to the opportunities for the goods of others, the consequences of which are far-reaching for them in their predicament, as well as ourselves in the hardening of our own hearts. In doing so we close ourselves off to each other. And unfortunately, there continues to be a chasm between the rich and the poor today, between the haves and have nots, between those who are healthy and not, between those who have citizenship and not, and the many other differentiations we make between race, creed, political parties, family lines and the like.

Now, the antidote to these sins of omission is quite simply to open ourselves to living in relationship with others. Solidarity is the virtue here that puts us in another's shoes and asks us to walk with each other. Solidarity, living in relationship with others, becoming aware of their story and their plight, sharing their grief and pain, their joys and hopes, opens our closed hearts to true love and compassion. It's a good feeling to help others out. It's amazing, too, the healing that compassionate service will do for your own weary heart. But I warn you in advance that compassion also hurts. Compassion literally means "suffering with." All we have to do is look at the crucifix to know how much God has opened his heart to us. Though God had all things, he left behind all the trappings of divinity that were rightly his and gave himself away to an undeserving people. We are called to do the same.

Now, maybe we are unable to materially help someone or it could be that such assistance ends up further enabling a bad situation, say for instance addictions or illegal activity. These are important deliberations in the balancing act of life, which help us love each other authentically. We know that boundaries are integral to healthy relationships. But let's not use these considerations as an excuse to shut others out and withdraw into our own worlds. We may not be able to help others materially, but that doesn't mean we can't love them still. Indifference, not hate, is the opposite of love. God's word is challenging us to repent, to move out of our complacency, to *be made ill* by the collapse of Joseph. Their troubles are our troubles. Their salvation is our salvation. Who are we neglecting, who is the Lazarus of our community, who has a name and a dignity the same as us? Think about it - am I my brother's keeper?

# Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 138

## Reading 1

Am 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.

## Responsorial Psalm

Ps 146:7, 8-9, 9-10

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

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

Blessed 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!**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

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!**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

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!**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

**Reading 2**

1 Tm 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.

**Alleluia**

Cf. 2 Cor 8:9

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

Though our Lord Jesus Christ was rich, he became poor,  
so that by his poverty you might become rich.

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Gospel**

Lk 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.'"