

## The 25th Sunday of Ordinary Time — September 22, 2019

The 1st Reading from the prophet Amos today condemns the exploitation of the poor. Amos lived about 760 B.C. He was a sheep herder who felt called by God to preach to the people of Israel about their social injustice, corruption, and shallow religion, and to warn them of the coming destruction. He was a great champion of justice. He assailed the oppression of the poor, as well as the justice system, which denied the poor any hope of attaining justice. Our short reading today is a clear example. He depicts the greed of the wealthy, who can't wait for the holy days to be over, so that they can get back to making money by dishonest practices:

***“When will the new moon be over, you ask, that we may sell our grain, and the sabbath, that we may display our wheat? We will diminish the Ephah, add to the shekel, and fix our scales for cheating.” !!!!!***

Amos is condemning all who pay lip service to God on the Sabbath, but exploit others, especially the poor, for the rest of the week. It is as relevant today as it was 2,700 years ago. How can we come here on the Sabbath, proclaim Jesus as Lord of our Lives, and go forth into our week and deny the very Gospel we proclaimed here in His presence today? This is the very difficult reality of life, and has continued to be for 2,000 years, since Jesus came among us and showed us how to live in our relationships with one another. But, we feel the need to do it ‘our way’! He invites us to do it His Way, but it just appears that we cannot do it His Way, because of the powerful influence of our world. It is not that we don't want to be religious, we do. But we don't practice sufficiently what it means to ‘Live in Him’ ..... what it means to follow His Way.

If I wish to become an accomplished piano player, singer, soccer player, T.V. personality, or great in any other profession, I know it takes practice, practice, practice. If I wish to become an effective Christian, it takes practice, practice, practice. Our Small Group Study sessions, which begin today, and the beautiful text we are following, is a powerful tool for us to practice, and to study the issues of what keeps me from becoming an authentic Christian. The text is: “Walking The Disciple's Path” (Eight Steps That Will Change Your Life and The World). We are so excited about this text and this study that we are making a copy available for all of our parish members, whether you happen to be in a Small Group, or not. We encourage you very strongly to be in a Small Group, and to share the wonderful benefits of this teaching to expand your personal growth, and that of others. However, we realize that such a schedule may not meet everybody's needs, and we encourage you to read along and study with us at your own pace.

The 1st Chapter of the text deals with a very powerful issue in all of our lives, it is titled “Surrendering Your Nets.” It is based on Jesus' invitation to the first disciples that he called ..... ‘leave your nets and follow me’ ! It invites me to explore ‘what are some of the nets that I need to let go of in order to follow Him?’ ..... or ‘what are some of the

nets that I still hold onto that are keeping me from accepting his invitation to Follow Him?’

The Gospel today is another very significant piece of the puzzle. It follows directly on last Sunday’s where Jesus presented those 3 wonderful parables for us to explore : *The Good Shepherd, The Woman who lost the Coin, and the Wonderful story of The Prodigal Son.* You may have noticed that those parables were specifically directed. The opening of the text says : *“The tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear him, at which the Pharisees and scribes murmured, ‘This man welcomes sinners and eats with them’ .....* Thank you, God that He Welcomes sinners and eats with them !!!! So, he addressed these parables to them.

This week, it says ‘Turning to His Disciples’ and He introduces another parable to them .... one found only in St. Luke’s Gospel. It is a very difficult parable to understand and to interpret clearly. I am sure the disciples, when they got away from the crowds, had a whole lot of questions for Him about this parable, as they did on many other occasions. We, too, have a lot of questions regarding this parable. Our staff had a marvelous discussion on this parable last Tuesday at our staff Meeting for more than an hour. I invite you to take out your Bible during the course of the week and look it over again .... It is the beginning of Luke chapter 16.

A great deal has been written by scripture scholars on this parable over the years. There is no single agreement in regards to its interpretation or application. Among the things that do appear to be clear for the disciples, and also for us, are :

1. Be trustworthy and reliable in small things, and you will also be the same in larger responsibilities.
2. You are very prudent in dealing with each other in everyday matters ..... why do you not choose to be prudent in spiritual matters and follow me?
3. As you make friends for yourself with dishonest wealth..... dishonest practices ..... be certain that it is bound to fail ultimately ..... Know then that I am still here for you, and I am with you !
4. In other words ..... Why not choose to ‘Surrender your Nets’ right now !

—Fr. Gerry Hurley