

Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year C

26th Sunday of Ordinary Time

First reading:

(Amos 6.1a, 4-7)

Couch potatoes

'Alas for those who lounge in front of the telly, munching their crisps and slurping their lager. Alas for those who roam the streets, singing raucously along with their blaring radios.' Is Amos simply a middle-aged spoil-sport, castigating the evils of his time?

The real question is whether they manoeuvre themselves off the couch for the sake of the needy person at the door, whether they spring out of the car to help the blind person across the road. Following that, what is our society coming to, what can I do to help remedy the fundamental ills of our society, whatever I conceive them to be? What can I, helpless and half-hearted as I am, do to build on the ruins? How far can Jesus push me?

One thing is sure, it is always one step further than my comfort zone. The Lord may not want me to go and be a Charles de Foucauld, a Romero, a Mother Teresa, but he always wants me to go one step nearer, whatever my state of life, one step at a time out of my comfort zone in response to his challenge. I can never say I have done all I need to do.

Question:

What more am I able and willing to do for one person in need?

Second reading:

(1 Timothy 6.11-16)

Sevenfold Praise

The letters to Timothy contain several little hymns of praise to Christ. After his final exhortation to Timothy to perseverance and to witness, the author gives this concluding doxology as an inspiration for his (and our) devotion to Christ, enumerating seven titles of Christ's pre-eminence.

In this egalitarian world, where TV has almost abolished the mystique of royalty, the first three titles of royalty (sovereign, king of kings and lord of lords) may not move us too much. But who would absent themselves if even a 'minor royal' was coming on a visit to office or factory, let alone the Lord of all Lords?

The other awesome titles cannot fail to draw us. He possesses as his own the immortality for which we crave. He dwells in the sphere of faultless light that we cannot even envisage, let alone enter. He is beyond our sight, our comprehension, even our imagination. His are power and honour without end. We can only be amazed at how far he is beyond us, and yet that he walked beside the Lake of Galilee with his chosen friends and allowed himself to be humiliated before his exaltation.

Question:

How can we envisage God's glory?

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Gospel:

(Luke 16.19-31)

The Rich Man and Lazarus

This story of Jesus comes only in Luke, another of those dreadful warnings of the danger of wealth, for Luke gives us always the gospel to the poor. Luke shows us those who blithely turn down their invitation to the banquet of the Kingdom in order to try out their new holiday cottage, their latest Porsche or the refitted yacht.

Through the Crafty Steward he reminds us that those who want to make money are often sharper than those who want to make the Kingdom. Through the Rich Fool he reminds us that well-stocked barns are no remedy against death.

There are three particularly horrible features of this parable: first, the flea-ridden dogs licking Lazarus' sores: there are no pets in Palestine; dogs are either bristling guard dogs or mangy curs. Second, the Rich Man's continuing self-absorption: even after death he still does not recognize Lazarus' existence and thinks only of his own burning tongue; contrast Abraham's gentleness: it almost looks as though he would cross the chasm if he could. Third, the obdurate brothers: they are just not willing to listen, even to the most startling event; nothing will distract them from their own selfish preoccupations.

Question:

When was the last time I turned my back on someone who needed my help?
