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Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart

***Twenty Fifth Week Ordinary Time***

Amos 8: 4-7    1 Timothy 2: 1-8    Luke 16: 1-13

Amos was a prophet. He began his working life as a shepherd from Tekoa. Like many people he was disturbed by the conditions in his country. The ordinary people were suffering, ground down by an oppressive class system. The rich were becoming richer at the expense of the poor. But, unlike most people, he decided to do something about it. So he left the land and went out to challenge the unjust.

Amos's gift was the gift of oratory. He could speech powerfully using images from his experience on the land. "Let justice surge like water, and goodness like an unfailing stream."

His people had sworn to be faithful to the treaty they had entered into with God. Amos believed it was a contradiction to promise fidelity to God on one hand and on the other hand deal unjustly with one another. He believed that God did not want a worship separated from honest human dealings.

His words are very relevant today when all around the world, including our own backyard, people claim to be religious and at the same time look for ways to lie and cheat and do violence to one another. Our political leaders are not immune from such self-serving ends. We even turn a blind eye to the slick methods that are used in business and even commend people on their cleverness in striking deals that border on the unlawful.

Luke picks up the same theme of greed when he recalls Jesus' story of the wily manager. When this story was told a manager was not given a wage. It was his responsibility to manage the business to make a profit for the owner and provide an income for himself. Because this system suited the owner the greed or malpractice of the owner went unchecked.

In this story a rumour reached the owner that the manager's excesses were becoming a byword. The owner decided to visit.

The manager was in a panic. How was he to cover his tracks? He knew that the owner would see that he had been overcharging and that he

would be fired. He knew he needed friends. So he visited the tenant farmers one by one and pretended that he was offering a discount.

The farmers were overjoyed, any rebate was more than welcome. The owner, when he found out, while being very angry gave credit for the shrewdness of his manager.  
What are we to make of this?  
Who is Luke speaking to?

The hearers of this story were primarily those who had leadership in the church. They represented the absent "Kyrios". It would appear that some of the leaders of the communities were abusing their role. Burdens were being placed on the ordinary members. Luke is reminding those leaders that they are accountable to God for their actions. Leaders must maintain a balance between care for the tradition and freedom to adapt to the changing times.

The leaders knew that good relationships with the members of the community would be the only saving factor. The way to the heart of God is through love of one another, so restitution had to be made.

Some common sayings of the time were added to the story. These are self evident in meaning.

The passage from the letter to Timothy is touching in its simple practicalness. Let us pray for our leaders and all those in authority so that we can get on with our lives in peace, tranquillity and holiness. We are also reminded that leaders are not mediators between God and the community-only Christ fills this role.

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