



a Kendall Hunt Company

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation:

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Amos 8:4-7

Psalms 113:1-2, 4-6, 7-8

1 Timothy 2:1-8

Luke 16:1-13 [or 16:10-13]

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading that appealed to you? Was there a word or image that engaged you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need for the session.

The Word In Liturgy

Today is the first of two Sundays in which we hear readings from the prophet Amos, who preached God's word in the northern kingdom of Israel before its destruction in 721 B.C. by the Assyrian invasion. His message was simple but biting: Through the events of history, divine judgment was being visited upon Israel for having abandoned the ways of justice and mercy so central to the covenant. The people are in a crisis, although they do not know it. The purpose of Amos' preaching is to shake them into an awareness of their true situation before God.

Today's passage is a harsh indictment of the greed and corruption common at the time. The reading highlights the damage done to the poor by the rapacious business practices of the rich. The poor are "bought" and "sold;" they are aggressively exploited by the wicked. The Mosaic law fixed the measure of the ephah and regulated the cycle of commerce and labor by the Sabbath and the cycles of the moon. The law was for the benefit of all, but it especially benefited the poor, who were more likely to suffer from being cheated, and for whom the relentless burdens of work would become intolerable without Sabbath rest. In Amos' description, the wicked chafe at these restrictions, and do their best to subvert them. The Lord pledges never to forget their crimes — a sure promise of judgment.

Today's Gospel from Luke is taken from a passage addressed to Jesus' disciples, not his opponents, and so is meant to state a positive message rather than launch a polemic.

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Although rather complicated in its details, the passage contains a coherent message which is in fact quite straightforward. The wily manager of the rich man's estate shows initiative when faced with a crisis (confrontation with his master, and loss of his job). The coming of the Messiah is likewise a crisis. The implicit question that is raised is: What are those who encounter the good news going to do about it? Will they be resourceful? Will they respond?

Throughout Luke's work, the way in which people use possessions reveals their character, their response to the good news, and ultimately their destiny. Today's passage enjoins the disciples to use their possessions (which ultimately belong to God and so are not their own anyway) to secure their everlasting reward (the one thing that will be theirs truly). They are asked to be faithful in a small thing (use of this world's goods) so as to be entrusted with a great thing (eternal life with God). When their worldly goods run out (death), they will have secured a place in heaven by having given generously to the poor and thus pleased God. Last of all, the passage warns that money can become an idol that competes with God for the worshipful allegiance of the human person. Each person must choose a single master. A decision is upon us.

Money, possessions, the goods of this world are all of crucial importance in how we live out our faith. Are we aware of our true situation before God? In the face of the crisis which the coming of God in Christ represents, will we be resourceful? When faced with the choice of a single master, what will we decide?

RCL Benziger
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Catholic Doctrine

Social Justice: Part I

On the Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time we examined the Church's social justice teaching from the viewpoint of the preferential option for the poor. On the Thirty-Third Sunday we will treat the notion of kingdom justice from the point of view of the end of the liturgical year and the impending feast of Christ the King. On this Sunday and next Sunday we treat some general doctrinal issues regarding social justice based on the gospel texts, official documents and related resources.

Each of us, as we are born into this world, are not equipped with everything we need in order to develop bodily or spiritually. We need each other. Differences in individuals are due to age, physical abilities, intellect, moral aptitude, the benefit of social commerce and the distribution of wealth (GS 29). Thus, while we are all equally valuable, created in the image and likeness of God, our innate personal gifts are not distributed equally and we are not born into the same social situation and opportunities.



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The Catholic position on these differences is that this is part of God's plan. God builds these differences into us so that we are required to receive from others what we need both bodily and spiritually to flourish. Differences among us encourage and oblige persons to practice generosity, kindness, sharing of goods. On a larger scale, these differences foster the mutual enrichment of cultures (CCC 1937).

In traditional Catholic moral theology, based in Thomas Aquinas, justice is understood as "the strong and firm will to give each person their due" (ST 2-2.58.1). Each should be given what they are due, and fairness is required in all our mutual agreements and exchanges. For example, the relationship between owners and employees, and between sellers and buyers should be characterized as just. Justice may lead to laws against unfair monopolies, or to laws upholding truth in advertising, or to laws ensuring a just wage, safe working conditions, and reasonable working hours.

Thus, the purpose of justice is, ultimately, to protect the dignity of persons and our rights which flow from this dignity. The very differences among us, given our abilities, our situations and our station in life, demand and encourage that love of one another that is the distinctive hallmark of the gospel of Jesus (CCC 1946). In loving one another, we are giving ourselves to kingdom values and to the God who is our Creator and author of that kingdom.

