



## 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 18, 2022,

St. Patrick Catholic Church- Frederiksted, St. Croix

First Reading: Amos 8:4-7, Psalm: 113:1-2,4-6,7-8

Second Reading: 1st Timothy 2: 1-8, Gospel: Luke 16:1-13

### ***Inspirational lines from the Sunday readings above for the Homily***

*“Jesus said to his disciples, “A rich man had a steward who was reported to him for squandering his property.”*

*“And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently.”*

*“I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.*

*“You cannot serve both God and Mammon.”*

*“This is good and pleasing to God our saviour, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.*

**Theme:** *“Salvation earned for us by Christ Jesus (Mediator between God and man) is for everyone and is gotten for oneself in the measure that one uses what one has for the good of others, especially the poor.”*

Selfishness that is thinking only of oneself is the basic cause of conflicts in our world. Think of any ongoing war – the origin lies in the self-centredness of one or both parties. The tendency to have more for ourselves by exploiting or cheating others is the order of the day in our modern society. The tendency of using our high positions of authority to have more for ourselves is the character of most persons who govern for example. When one is given a position of authority over others, instead of using this position to serve those put under one’s charge, the tendency most of the time is the search for what one will have for oneself and not how one can work for the common good of the community.

In the Gospel Passage of today, the problem of the Steward of the rich man is that he was squandering the rich man’s property alone, to the neglect of the others. When he is fired for dishonesty, he comes to his senses, to use this very property of the rich man to share with the others, in order that he earns their friendship, and be welcomed by them when he finally leaves his job. He therefore invites his master’s debtors and reduced their debts one by one, so that when he finally leaves, they may welcome him in their homes. Before now, he did not realize that others could share in the rich man’s property when he was the Steward in control. He wanted to have everything for himself. In the same way according to our theme, God’s salvation is meant for everyone, and one cannot keep this salvation to himself alone. The Son of God

earned this salvation for all of mankind and not only for the rich or only for the poor, but for the rich and poor alike.

The Steward had neglected others to use the property of the rich man alone for his own private benefits and that is why a report came about him, since he had this position of authority and the advantage of administering his master's money, the way he wanted. When fired he realized how weak and disgraced, he will be alone. He says, ***"I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg."*** Salvation comes to us when we recognize the other persons and work together with them. Nobody is an Island. The other person poor or rich has something to add to your life. We achieve salvation as a community, not as individuals, though we will be judged as individuals in the last judgment. It is the law of nature that what goes up must come down. Hence, the saying which goes; ***"when you are going up, greet those who are coming down, so that when you will be coming down, you will have people who can greet you."*** The Steward discovered that he was up there with his authority alone and now that he must come down, there is no one to greet him (welcome him). Therefore, he must double run and act fast to make friends with his master's debtors.

The text ends with the words; ***"And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently."*** He is not being praised because he is dishonest with his master's property, but he is being praised for his prudence in the realization he had made a mistake of squandering his master's property alone and now is time to share with others so that they can welcome him in their homes. Jesus ends the discourse with the following words: ***"I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings."*** This gives us our theme of reflection today namely, ***"Salvation earned for us by Christ Jesus (Mediator between God and man) is for everyone and is gotten for oneself in the measure that one uses what one has for the good of others, especially the poor."***

In our first reading of today's Liturgy the prophet Amos prophesizes against the rich of Israel, who trample upon the needy and the poor of the land! What do these rich people do? The prophet Amos tells us that the rich of the land are anxious to see the celebration of the new moon<sup>1</sup> and the Sabbath come to pass, so that they can sell their wheat grain to the poor. They do this by reducing the 'ephah'<sup>2</sup> thereby fixing

---

<sup>1</sup> The new moon in Hebrew is 'Rosh Hodesh' (head of the month or start of the Hebrew month. It is a time of spiritual renewal. It is a day when the prophets heard from Yahweh; a day designated for waiting upon Yahweh, for discerning his purposes and for prophetic revelation.

<sup>2</sup> The 'ephah' is an ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to one tenth homer or a little over a bushel. This is about 35 liters or 4.99 US gallons.

the scale to cheat the poor to whom they are to sell the wheat grain, so that they make more money. The poor who were unable to buy became their slaves. They also sold to the poor leftovers of the wheat grain as if it were a good grade of grain. This is what the prophet Amos castigates the rich for doing in relationship to the poor. This reading ends by the Lord emphasizing that he cannot forget what these rich people do to the poor. They suppressed them, cheat them, and enslave them in the way they sell wheat grain to them (which is what they must live on). The rich people think more about making money for themselves and not about helping the poor, to alleviate their poverty. It is clear then that the ego (selfishness) of the rich that is the **'Only Me'** philosophy overshadows the common good for everyone. The rich think about themselves and how to make more money for themselves and not at those at the fringes of society. The Lord indicates to these rich people, he can never forget their misdeeds to these helpless poor. In other words, persons who behave like this loose salvation, which is knowledge of God as the only Truth. God allows them to their cheating, and they are eventually destroyed. This is because as the Psalmist says in Psalm 113; ***'God raises up the lowly from the dust/from the dunghill he lifts up the poor to seat them with princes/with the princes of his own people.'*** The Lord equates the poor with Princes. He raises the poor and puts them at the same level with the princes of this world. The poor are the princes of God's Kingdom, because God wants everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth, which is God himself. Therefore, he castigates the rich Israelites and does not forget their wrongdoing to the poor.

If the rich want to get salvation, they must recognize the poor people, the Princes of God's Kingdom. They must not enslave them. They should not extort them, but rather share what they have with them, and then their salvation is guaranteed together with the poor. The gospel again reiterates; ***'No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon.'*** All the money or the wealth that we have belongs to the master who is God. Money is used for the service of God by sharing it with others and not the service of oneself by hoarding it or squandering it in a reckless lifestyle. If you use money to project yourself (ego), then Money has become your god. In this case, you may miss the salvation won for us by Christ Jesus, who is the mediator between God and men, who gave himself up as a ransom for many by dying on the cross.

Up till now we have been saying in different ways that what we have is given to us for the good of others. If we do not share the things, we have which is 'dishonest' wealth, we cannot be a friend of God and at the end of our lives we may not be

welcomed into the eternal dwellings of God. This means we will lose the salvation already won for us by God's Only Begotten Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Substituting the Steward in the Gospel who was reported for squandering his master's property alone with our own names, we can ask ourselves how we have also squandered or not squandered the property that God has given us, beginning with our own personal lives. Have we shared the property of our master (God) that he gave us with others especially the poor? What are the things we have in our homes that we don't use them, and we continue to stockpile them meanwhile many persons are dying for want of them? Catholic Charities awaits these things to distribute them to the homeless poor if you give it to the Church. What have we done and are doing with our own lives, the greatest gift that God has given us? The Catechism question's answer to the question 'why did God make me?' is '***God made me to know him, to love him, to serve him and to be happy with him for ever in heaven***'. Can we say we are living our lives with this focus? Some persons will pretend that they do not have enough for themselves, before sharing with others, especially the poor. The answer to such people is that you don't give because you have enough. You give because it is good to share. Also, there is no one who is so poor that he has nothing to share and no one so rich that he has nothing to receive from others. Liquid cash may not be what you may have. You may have some talents or your time or physical strength to offer for the good of the Church Community or society at large.

Many persons move with their eyes closed and do not see the poor and the needy around them. Let us try to open our eyes and we shall discover a needy person by us. Begin at your home with those with whom you share your daily life. Do they all have what they need? Do your children at home have their basic needs? When it comes to husband and wife, it is clear you need each other. The fundamental question is are you available to each other? Go out to your neighbourhood, we have many shut-ins, how many do you visit in a week? There are lapsed Christians. How many have you tried to convince to come back to Church? There has been a misconception that the Church is rich because some people think that the pope shares some money every year to all Bishops and Priests to use. This is not the case. The Christians are the money of the Church. To say that the Church is rich would be to assess yourself and ask yourself what you contribute every Sunday. If you think that your contribution can make the Church rich, then you are right in your interpretation. If you think the contrary, do something about your contribution, for the Christians are the money of the Church. The Church is the first poor person who needs our support because the Church is the umbrella of all the poor persons in Society. This is the reason why we have the institution called Catholic Charities. Finally, the greatest offer you could give to the Church is to accept to do what you are asked to do and

not only what you want to do by your liking. This is an effort of letting go of our own egos (selfishness) for others by sharing our talents with them.

Given therefore, the temptation we have in what we have or are given to keep it for ourselves, especially those chosen as leaders in our midst, St. Paul in our second reading of today's liturgy asks for supplications, prayers, petitions and thanksgivings to be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity, since God wills everyone to be saved and to come to full knowledge of the truth, that is himself. In this case those in leadership positions will have the courage to use their positions for service of the common good and not of themselves. Let us follow this admonition of St. Paul and pray for our political leaders, especially those who are vying for posts of responsibilities in our next coming elections in November 2022, to direct their campaign towards the common good of all, by having a spirit of sharing. We shall also pray that we on our own part may learn to share with others the little we have and that in our dealings with one another we should act honestly. Finally, that we should use dishonest wealth in the words of Jesus to gain heaven by sharing what we have with the poor and the marginalized of society. We therefore conclude by reminding ourselves of our central discussion according to our theme as follows; ***“Salvation earned for us by Christ Jesus (Mediator between God and man) is for everyone and is gotten for oneself in the measure that one uses what one has for the good of others, especially the poor.”*** To God is the Glory in Christ Jesus Our Lord. Amen.

***Fr. Cyprian Tatah – Pastor, St. Patrick Church, Frederiksted, St. Croix***