

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2010

America is a country of business enterprise where the “primary motive is profit and not mere employment for oneself and others”.. A business is good when it is successful. The success of a business depends on many factors like the intelligence of the manager, the dynamism of the workers, the capability to adapt to the changing market, the ability to generate and maximize the profits, etc. Whatever might be its status, however, a business can be so obsessed with its profits and benefits that it forgets the simple question of justice and human rights. That is exactly the situation the prophet Amos is denouncing in the first reading.

In fact, the prophet condemns those who pretend to be religious and observe scrupulously the holy days of obligation while they practice injustice against their fellow humans. For Amos, God will never forget such a mistreatment and one day he will reject those people.

What is behind this text is the idea that God identifies with the poor and the needy because they are all created in his image. Therefore, whoever cares for God should care for the needy, and whoever cheats on the poor, is cheating on God. Another point is the idea that the things we enjoy in this world are God’s gifts. If so, we are not the owners but the stewards of God’s many gifts. What is expected from a steward is good management and not squandering of the wealth of his master.

All that helps us understand what is at stake in the parable Jesus gives in today’s Gospel. The parable is about a manager who is reported to his boss for squandering his property. In order to put an end that situation, his boss decides to fire him. Aware of what is about to happen to him; the manager makes a financial arrangement with the debtors of his master. For that reason, he alleviates their debts so that they might be favorable to him after the loss of his job. What he does, indeed, is to falsify the entries in the account book of the business so that the debtors pay less than what they owe. In that sense, he shows himself more generous with the money of his boss, but for the profit he wants to reap for himself later.

Why does Jesus tell this story? This story is important, because it teaches us something about the kingdom of God. First of all, Jesus invites us to realize that we live in a situation of urgency, where we are summoned to make a decision immediately and without delay for our eternal salvation. If the manager has renounced an immediate profit he would have had on the money from the debts of his master in order to build good relationships for the future, it can be only legitimate that we too do whatever is in our power for the benefit of our salvation.

That astuteness in the management of the business is an appeal to us that we too, as Christians, must be clever in dealing with the things of our soul. We have to use all our abilities and skills in order to succeed in our spiritual life, as do those in human business.

If the master commends this bad manager, it is not because he appreciates his dishonesty, but because instead of squandering his money as he did before, he is able to build with it

strong relationships that will never be destroyed. That is what we have to do also for our eternal salvation.

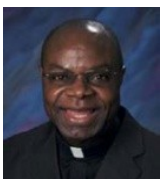
Second, Jesus invites us to realize that we have to live in solidarity with our fellow humans. In fact, God has blessed us with many gifts in this world. Some of us are better off than others. There is a reason for all that; it is so that we share our life and our goods with the less fortunate and the needy. For that reason, we have to use our material goods for charity and for building friendships with those who have nothing. In that perspective, when the rich help the poor in this world, they build a treasure in heaven.

The point of the parable is not aiming at condemning material possessions or money as though it is something bad. What is at stake is the conviction that we should not live selfishly, but in solidarity with our fellows, in doing good to them. This is so true that we have been grateful to many friends and benefactors who have provided with funds to support churches, schools, hospitals, people in need, etc. Their generosity has brought change and improvement of situations in the church and in the world. That is why money creates responsibility toward the less fortunate and the needy.

Third, Jesus invites us to give the best of ourselves in every task we undertake. The truth behind all this is that whoever is trustworthy or dishonest in small things will be also trustworthy or dishonest in great things. The way of fulfilling a small task is the best proof of fitness or unfitness to be trusted with a bigger task. What is true here for human business is also true for eternal life. If that is so, it means that what we get in heaven depends on how we use the things of this world.

Lastly, Jesus wants us to realize that we have to make a choice of serving his Father and not our money. When he says that “No servant can serve two masters”, he is inviting us to make God our guide whenever we handle money or do business. He reminds us that God is the most exclusive of the masters. Either we are with him, or we are against him.

All this is not easy to understand or to accept unless we are people of prayer. As St Paul suggests, we have to pray for God’s guidance in all the circumstances of life. As we are called to live in solidarity with our fellow humans, in the same way our prayer, in all its variety, should be universal in its scope. We have to pray for everyone, for the president and for all in authority, so that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity, in a way that is pleasing to God. We have to pray, especially for businessmen so that they put human relationships and needs above economic interests. We pray for our country so that the present difficult financial situation may not destroy our relationship with one another. May God bless you all!



Homily Date: September 19, 2010
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Contact: www.mbala.org
Document Name: 20100919homily.pdf

Amos 8, 4-7; 1Timothy 2, 1-8; Luke 13, 1-13