

## Twenty-Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Year C

Amos 8: 4-7  
Psalm 113  
1 Timothy 2:1-8  
Luke 16:10-13

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From the very beginning of our first reading today, we are hit with the reality of God's love for the poor and his disdain for those who hurt them.

"Never will I forget," he says, those who "trample upon the needy and destroy the poor of the land!"

But who are the needy? Who are the poor of the land?

We could easily answer these questions by going to the lowest common denominator and reducing the concept of need and poverty to the material poor. How easy it would be to simply put a few dollars in a collection plate, dollars we would most likely never miss and never think of again, to help alleviate the physical and material suffering of others.

In no way do I mean to minimize the suffering of the material poor.

Poverty is an epidemic brought on by human greed alone, an epidemic St. Augustine addressed again and again during his lifetime.

"If you were giving something that was your own," he once said, "then [your charity] would be pure largesse, but since you give what is God's, you are repaying a debt."

You see, you and I own nothing.

Sure we "own" real estate and clothing, cars, etc. Even more sure, we work hard for them. Many of you are attending college with the hope of developing marketable skills that will one day translate into a lucrative career. Most of you would like a nice home, a spouse, children, a car or two and some money to spare for vacations and retirement. No one dreams of living in a cardboard box!

We have possession of these things and by civil law we "own" them. By God's law, however, they came to be through the talents we have been given by God as pure gift. By right, *all we are* belongs to God and God alone. And of our "extras," Augustine says "the superfluous goods of the rich are the necessary goods of the poor." Think about that the next time you are in the cafeteria and see someone throw out untouched food.

Yet, it is not just about the material poor. There are many who are materially wealthy who are also quite poor.

There is poverty of spirit.

Many people walk through life not knowing how to connect to God; people who don't know that they are children of the God who loved them into being.

Reach out to them. Share some of your spirit of truth and love with them.

YOU KNOW you are loved by God.

YOU KNOW that the Spirit moves in you.

Share some of your spirit with another who needs it.

There is poverty of self-worth.

You don't have to look far to see and know people who have been beaten down physically or psychologically. There are many among us who have been told by one or another that they are not "worthy" of attention or love. There are many more who think that they are not "good enough" to even speak of, let alone talk to, God.

Share some of your self-worth with them.

God has let you know how precious you are in his sight.

God has told you how much he loves and values you.

Share some of your self-worth with another person who lacks it, for that same self worth also belongs to them.

There is poverty of kindness.

Rude people are everywhere. The silent treatment abounds. Rumors and Gossip fill minds with worthless drivel.

Break the cycle by sharing the kindness you have been taught by God through others. A little kindness can go a long way in making others realize their own full potential as children of God.

There is poverty of morality.

"Friends with Benefits," academic dishonesty, backstabbing, marriage for money on TV., war, domestic violence, gang wars, murder, rape, embezzlement, child abuse, arson, vandalism, drugs, theft, and a countless number of other horrible things can be seen in our world every day.

There is an undeniable poverty of morality around us.

YOU have been given the gift of gospel. You have been given the sight to recognize right from wrong and the fortitude to choose right. Share some of your wisdom and insight with others who lack that clarity and continue to pray for all of us.

There is more than one way to be poor and needy.

There is more than one way to help alleviate poverty and need.

There is only one God who shows us the way.

The words we heard in the first reading from the prophet Amos were direct and to the point. So are the words of Timothy when he asserts that God wishes ALL OF US to be saved and lead "quite and tranquil lives." So are the words of Jesus when he says "the person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones." God trusts you, here and now, to reach out to the poor and needy; those who have material, spiritual, emotional, and moral needs of every kind. All God asks is that you share a bit of your wealth with others, a bit of your bread with the hungry, a bit of your life with another.