

[Readings: Amos 8:4-7 Ps 113:1-2, 4-8 1 Timothy 2:1-8 Luke 16:1-13]

God's economics is different from human economics. Poverty, as shown by many Saints, is not the only path to holiness. This Sunday's Gospel reading tells us how a person can be affluent and holy at the same time -- as shown by other Saints.

If we recognize that our possessions are gifts from God that are meant to enhance His Kingdom, we are on the way to holiness. But if we cling to money and material wealth as if they are meant only for our own benefit, we've divided ourselves from God. God's Word emphasizes the importance of distributing to others a generous portion of everything we've received. The worship or love of money is called mammon.

When acquiring wealth is a higher priority than distributing what we already have, God is not our master. This is true not only with material goods, but with everything else that is good, too. We are all richly blessed one way or another: How readily are you and I use our riches for the benefit of others?

The "dishonest wealth" of which Jesus speaks is anything worldly that "belongs to another". When we use other people's money (for example, taking out a loan from the bank) to our own advantage, we are not being trustworthy stewards unless it also glorifies the Kingdom of God. For example, a bank loan for a house mortgage is good because it serves the family, but only as long as it doesn't require so much income that a bigger house means little time for your family.

Likewise, if we misuse time by catering to selfish desires at the expense of those who need our attention, we are untrustworthy in the Kingdom of God. Jesus wants to bless people through us. He has called us to be a distributor of his gifts. If we ignore this primary principle of God's economy, Jesus says, "Who will give you what is yours?" What is ours, if we're trustworthy enough to be good stewards, are riches that will remain with us for all of eternity: the wealth of the spirit, the approval and praise of God, and the fullness of love. To be holy with affluence, we have to first be trustworthy with the love that belongs to others -- the love that God feels for them. Our trust-ability is found in the sharing of our earthly goods as well as eternal goods (faith, wisdom, hope.).

What are you reluctant to share? What do you fear will happen if you surrender it to God for his use and His purposes? What do you need to do with this fear so that you can become a good steward of God's riches?

What material things that seems to be used only for worldly or selfish purposes can be converted into a gift for others and used for the glory of God? If so, how?

In our First Reading, Amos judges the political and religious leaders of his day and warns of the collapse of the Northern Kingdom of Israel because of inward corruption and outward military attack. He condemns them for enjoying a wealthy and comfortable life at the expense of the general public and for the neglect and abuse of the poor. Even St. Paul in our Second Reading today asks us to pray for “kings and all in authority.” We need to do that in this day and age in our country and in our state now and more than ever!

Once upon a time, thieves broke into the San Bernardino California County Sexual Assault Services office late one night and stole six computers, a laptop, and other valuables. As the police were investigating the crime scene, the TV and radio media were there recording the event. The executive director was asked about the purpose of the organization, explaining that the nonprofit assisted victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence. At 4:30 in the morning after a long night surveying the damage, the executive director of the organization was summoned back to the scene once again by police.

When the director arrived, to her amazement she was greeted by the sight of a shopping cart filled with all of the items that had been stolen. Investigators found a handwritten note in the laptop that read:

We had no idea what we were taking. Here’s your stuff back. We hope that you guys can continue to make a difference in people’s lives. God bless.

Police, too, were surprised by this turn of events. The San Bernardino Police lieutenant in charge of the investigation said, “This is the first time in my career I have seen the return of stolen items.” People’s hearts *can* be moved to do the right thing.

A Kansas City airport worker returned a lost cargo bag that had fallen out of an armored car and lay on the side of the road. It contained \$266,000 in jewelry. Several months earlier, a New York City cabbie tracked down a passenger who had left a jeweler’s bag in his trunk containing 31 diamond rings. The soft-spoken cabbie, originally from Bangladesh -- one of the poorest

countries on Earth, per capita, said: "I enjoy my life. I'm satisfied. I'm not going to take someone else's money or property to make me rich. I don't want it that way."

How would we react if we found a bag of jewels? None of us will really know, barring the unlikely event that we face such a test. But we can use Jesus' guideline to gage our likely response: "The one who is faithful in little matters is faithful also in much larger matters."

There are three possible reasons why the master commends the dishonest manager in Jesus' story. *Jesus likes people of **action**, people who are **trustworthy**, and people who **serve**.* There are times that call for immediate action. God wants us to pray when we are in a difficult situation, but God also wants us to act. Pick up the phone. Enlist the help of family or a friend. Learn some new skills. Don't sit there passively and expect someone else to rescue you. I address these words especially to our confirmation candidates.

From your parish, you will receive a Bible. From our local Pius X Council of the Knights of Columbus, you will receive a copy of the Youth Catechism. In both books, you will find the answers to all of your questions about life and faith. If you don't find the answers in these two books, come and ask me about it. If you still are not satisfied with the answer, go ask your mother!

Jesus says that we Christians don't have that same tenacity toward the things of God. Even the devil works harder than you and I do, to get the job done! Billy Graham said it all: "When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when character is lost, all is lost."

Let us take every small opportunity to be honest stewards of wealth, so that if we face the greater test, we will have developed the wisdom and integrity to react as did the airport worker and the cabbie and the thieves at the center.
AMEN!