

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

“Beloved: First of all, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions and thanksgivings 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. Without arguing, anger and resentment (1 Tim 2:1-2).”

It seems that at no time in our history as a nation has there been such a great need for “supplications, prayers, petitions and thanksgivings,” right? I heard on the news this week that a record number of U.S. Senators and Representatives have announced that they will not be seeking re-election this year. The largest number in our nation’s history. Why? Because two of our most cherished rights – the right to free speech and the right of religious freedom – are being eroded, sliced and diced. I wonder what our Founding Fathers and Mothers would have to say if they could see what our political and social culture have become in our country.

As Catholics, we respect those who disagree with what we preach, teach and strive for to live out daily. Can they respect us? We advocate for the dignity of all persons, a dignity that includes a life free from violence and persecution. People of faith are a source of American strength. An inclusive and religiously diverse society should make room for them.

Our First Reading and our Gospel today speak about people who con others with their words and actions. 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. In our country – and in our world -- it appears that the rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer.

Jesus tells a parable today about a man whose ethics were certainly out of whack, but his sense of survival was kicking in at full speed. He was taking a risk, of course the risk that his boss would have him thrown in jail.

That's what COULD have happened. But remember this: the amount he cut off on the debtor's bills was HIS commission, not his boss's! That's why the boss calls him clever.

A steward is one who has the management of his master's property, and is answerable for the care of his land. Today we learn that we are not masters of what we possess, but rather stewards of that which is another's – all of our possessions come from God. Although we might seem to be the absolute masters of our own possessions, yet with respect to God, who is Lord over all, we are only stewards. Because, whatever we own and have, God gives us for the relief of the poor. Jewish stewards were expected to give one tenth of their financial wealth to the temple leaders for their ministry. That is what we call a "tithe." The expectation was to give 10% of your income back to God.

What does St. Augustine say? "To me, the meaning of the passage seems this; that whatever the Jews do for the priests and Levites, should be more liberally provided for in the Catholic Church; if the Jews give a tenth, Christians should give a half, as Zacchaeus gave, or at least they should give two tenths, and thus exceed the payments of the Jews." I don't expect anyone here to give half of their income to the Church and charity, but 10% would be good. As I like to say, God is our Jewish manager, and he wants his 10%!

20% would be even better, and some of our parishioners do give that.

Today's Gospel parable was directed against the avarice, greed and self-comfort of the Pharisees. And our own selfishness.

We are taught to use our riches not for our own selfish ends, but for the relief of our poorer brothers and sisters, children and elderly, so that we may give a good account of our stewardship, and obtain our due reward on the Day of Judgement. This is why the unjust steward is held up as an example, and not because of his injustice and fraud.

Three lessons for us to learn today:

- 1.) That all of our money, our health, and our intellect are gifts from God.
- (2.) We are to use these gifts and talents for the honor and glory of God.

(3.) That on Judgement Day, you and I will have to give an account, not only for the sins which we have committed, but also for duties which we have neglected to perform.

This weekend, we commission and bless our catechists on this annual Catechetical Sunday. We thank them for taking the risk to share their faith with others in the parish. We bless our parents, grandparents and guardians who are called to be the first and best teachers of the Catholic Faith for their children. And we accept the promises made by our Confirmation candidates to grow and learn their Catholic Faith and to put it into practice for the rest of their lives.

The theme for Catechetical Sunday 2025 is “Always be ready to give an explanation... for a reason for your hope” (1 Peter 3:15.) The theme emphasizes the importance of being prepared to share the foundations of one’s faith and the hope that comes from it.

It encourages individuals to reflect on their role in evangelization and catechesis, reminding them to communicate their beliefs with gentleness and respect, as highlighted in the Scriptures.

This theme aligns with the Church's mission of fostering a deeper understanding of faith among its members and encouraging them to actively participate in sharing the Gospel. It serves as a reminder that every baptized person --- that means you and I -- has a role in handing on the faith and witnessing to the teachings of Christ.

In a nutshell: catechesis is the ACT of teaching and learning; a catechist is the ONE who teaches and learns; the catechumenate is the group of people WHO are learning; and catechism is WHAT is being taught or is being learned.

Evangelization is giving personal witness to the activity of the Holy Spirit in your life, sharing with others your personal relationship with Jesus Christ and listening to God speak to you and to others through the Good News of His Holy Word.

One commentator suggests that Catechetical Sunday should be elevated to a solemnity. The color of today’s vestments would be red, because religion teachers are the unsung martyrs of the church.

Pope St. John XXIII understood this when he advised the young man who insisted he wanted to sacrifice his life for the Gospel as a missionary martyr.

The pope said, "Don't be a martyr. Be a teacher. It's much harder."

May we never tire of learning, teaching and proclaiming our Catholic faith!

AMEN!