

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C

(Amos 6:1a, 4-7; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; Luke 16:19-31)

Excerpts of Pope Francis - 29 September 2019

by Father Charles Fillion

25 September 2022

Brothers and sisters, today, the Universal Church is observing the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. Previously followed on the 2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time, Pope Francis moved the observance in 2019 on the last Sunday of September. Actually, it fits well with the readings of this Sunday. Even the Psalm reminds us that the Lord upholds the stranger as well as the widow and the orphan among his people. The Psalmist makes explicit mention of those persons who are especially vulnerable, often forgotten and subject to oppression. The Lord has a particular concern for foreigners, widows and orphans, for they are without rights, excluded and marginalized. This is why God tells the Israelites, and to us today, to give them special care.

This loving care for the less privileged is presented as a characteristic trait of the God of Israel and is likewise required, as a moral duty, of all those who would belong to his people. That is why we must pay special attention to the strangers in our midst as well as to widows, orphans and all the outcasts of our time. Like Pope Francis says often, it is not only about foreigners; it is about all those in existential peripheries who, together with migrants and refugees, are victims of the throwaway culture. The Lord calls us to practise charity towards them. He calls us to restore their humanity, as well as our own, and to leave no one behind.

Along with the exercise of charity, the Lord also invites us to think about the injustices that cause exclusion – and in particular the privileges of the few, who, in order to preserve their status, are acting to the harm many. Today's world is increasingly becoming more cruel towards the excluded. Developing countries continue to be drained of their best natural and human resources for the benefit of a few privileged markets. Wars only affect some regions of the world, yet weapons of war are produced and sold in other regions which are then *unwilling to take in* the refugees generated by these conflicts. Those who pay the price are always the little ones, the poor, the most vulnerable, who are prevented from sitting at the table and are left with the 'crumbs' of the banquet".

It is in this context that the first reading should be understood the harsh words proclaimed from the Prophet Amos. Woe to those who are at ease and seek pleasure in Zion, who do not worry about the ruin of God's people, even though it is in plain sight. They do not notice the destruction of Israel because they are too busy ensuring that they can still enjoy the good life, delicious food and fine drinks. It is striking how, twenty-eight centuries later, these warnings remain as timely as ever. For today too, the "culture of comfort... makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people... which results in indifference to others; indeed, it even

leads to the globalization of indifference.

In the end, we too risk becoming like that rich man in the Gospel who is unconcerned for the poor man Lazarus, “covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table”. Too intent on buying elegant clothes and organizing lavish banquets, the rich man in the parable is blind to Lazarus’s suffering. Overly concerned with preserving our own well-being, we too risk being blind to our brothers and sisters in difficulty.

Yet, as Christians, we cannot be indifferent to the tragedy of old and new forms of poverty, to the bleak isolation, contempt and discrimination experienced by those who do not belong to “our” group. We cannot remain insensitive, our hearts numbed, before the misery of so many innocent people. We must not fail to weep. We must not fail to respond. Let us ask the Lord for the grace of tears, the tears that can convert our hearts of such sins.

If we want to be men and women of God, as Saint Paul urges Timothy, we must “keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*1 Tm* 6:14). The commandment is to love God and love our neighbour; the two cannot be separated! Loving our neighbour as ourselves means being firmly committed to building a more just world, in which everyone has access to the goods of the earth, in which all can develop as individuals and as families, and in which fundamental rights and dignity are guaranteed to all.

God gave this holy commandment to his people and sealed it with the blood of his Son Jesus, to be a source of blessing for all humankind. So that all together we can work to build the human family according to his original plan, revealed in Jesus Christ: all are brothers and sisters, all are sons and daughters of the same Father.

Today we also need a mother. So we entrust to the maternal love of Mary, Our Lady of the Way, of so many painful journeys, all migrants and refugees, together with those who live on the peripheries of our world and those who have chosen to share their journey.