

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Even this opening narration should signal the harsh judgment to follow.

Your tone must tell us that this "complacency" is ill-gotten and ungodly.

Your energy and disapproval grow with each item added to this list.

They drink wine by the bowlful!

This is where their focus *should* be. Pause before the final sentence.

Speak slowly. This is not God's vengeance, but the sad consequence of their choices!

For meditation and context:

LECTIONARY #138

READING I Amos 6:1a, 4-7

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Amos

**Thus says the LORD, the God of hosts:
Woe to the complacent in Zion!
Lying upon beds of ivory,
stretched comfortably on their couches,
they eat lambs taken from the flock,
and calves from the stall!
Improvising to the music of the harp,
like David, they devise their own accompaniment.
They drink wine from bowls
and anoint themselves with the best oils;
yet they are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph!
Therefore, now they shall be the first to go into exile,
and their wanton revelry shall be done away with.**

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 146:7, 8-9, 9-10 (1b)

**R. Praise the Lord, my soul!
or R. Alleluia.**

Blessed is he who keeps faith forever,
secures justice for the oppressed,
gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets captives free.

The LORD gives sight to the blind;
the LORD raises up those who were
bowed down.

The LORD loves the just;
the LORD protects strangers.

The fatherless and the widow he sustains,
but the way of the wicked he thwarts.
The LORD shall reign forever;
your God, O Zion, through all
generations. Alleluia.

READING I When Amos was prophesying, Israel was enjoying political, economic, and military strength. More accurately, the wealthy were enjoying such abundance, while the poor suffered at their hands. Those who controlled all the prosperity were so far from living according to the covenant that Amos developed a lamentation over them in terminology that sounds like a funeral dirge. Although the nation appears to be alive and well, Amos laments over them, as if they had already died.

One of the words of Amos' lamentation, "woe" (*hoy*, 5:18), is the opening word in today's reading: "Woe to the complacent in Zion." Those whom Amos describes as complacent, lying on beds of ivory, are the objects of his funeral lament. Their food of lambs and calves, the music of the harp, drinking of wine, and anointing with oil belong to the celebration of a religious feast. Yet their actions are no more than a parody of worship; they are using the trappings of the sacred to indulge in self-serving excesses.

While there is no mention of the poor and needy, their very absence highlights the exclusivity of the gathering. The poor would rarely be able to afford meat of any kind, but the wealthy are eating the meat used for sacrifice. They also drink an excess of wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the best oils.

The single word "therefore" in the final verse introduces the consequences of their lifestyle. The collapse of their nation, when they will be the first sent into exile, will come because of their own sinful disdain

READING II 1 Timothy 6:11-16

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy

But you, man of God, pursue righteousness,
devotion, faith, love, patience and gentleness.
 Compete well for the faith.
 Lay hold of **eternal life**, to which you were called
 when you made the **noble confession** in the presence
 of many witnesses.
I charge you before God, who gives life to all things,
 and before **Christ Jesus**,
 who gave testimony under **Pontius Pilate**
 for the **noble confession**,
 to **keep the commandment** without stain or reproach
 until the appearance of our **Lord Jesus Christ**
 that the **blessed and only ruler**
 will make **manifest** at the **proper time**,
 the **King of kings and Lord of lords**,
 who **alone has immortality**, who dwells
 in **unapproachable light**,
 and whom **no human being has seen or can see.**
To him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

Catch your listeners' attention immediately with the unexpected salutation, then slowly list the virtues we are to pursue.

What's at stake is our "eternal life." Be sure to make this sound important.

"I charge you" is fraternal encouragement, not scolding.

"The commandment" refers to all commandments.

The two titles are similar, but increase your energy from the first to the second.
 Beloved = bee-LUHV-uhd

Speak the last line from memory.

GOSPEL Luke 16:19-31

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

Jesus said to the Pharisees:
 "There was a **rich man** who dressed in **purple garments**
 and **fine linen**
 and dined **sumptuously** each day. >>

Unique to Luke, this parable, addressed to the Pharisees, calls us all to repentance in due season.

for the poor, while they make a mockery of authentic worship.

READING II Paul begins his exhortation to Timothy by addressing him as "man of God." The designation, used of Hebrew prophets, indicates that Paul sees Timothy as one chosen by God who will carry on Paul's prophetic role as a leader in the faith. In today's reading, Paul gives Timothy a final instruction; he doesn't delineate specific tasks for Timothy to perform, but presents to him a way of life that flows from his Baptism. Paul begins with a

list of virtues that Timothy should pursue, implying energetic dedication to living as Jesus did: in righteousness, devotion, and the other virtues manifest in Jesus.

The energy of pursuing virtue is also needed for Timothy to compete well for the faith. Like an athlete striving to win the prize, Timothy is to strain forward toward the finish line. Because eternal life is a gift already possessed as a down payment, Timothy can lay hold of it even now as he runs toward the completion of the race and the fullness of eternal life.

At Baptism, Timothy had made a noble confession, or profession of faith. The faith that Timothy professes, like that of everyone in the Church, includes adherence to the teaching handed down, the pursuit of virtue, and keeping the commandments. Having exhorted Timothy to virtue and faith, Paul turns his focus to Christ in a poetic text that may have been part of a baptismal profession of faith. This rich proclamation about Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, moves naturally to prayer, concluding with a faith-filled "Amen!"