

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Make eye contact. The prophet's goal is to get people to hear God's warning!

Convey the impatience of the greedy who want to get back to making money.

Ephah = EE-fah (a unit of dry measure)

Shekel = SHEK-**I* (a unit of weight)

Their plots become increasingly sinister and heartless.

Pause, then announce God's solemn promise. The threat here is greater than in the opening line.

TO KEEP IN MIND

Exhortatory texts make an urgent appeal to listeners. They may encourage, warn, or challenge, and often include a call to action. You must convey the urgency and passion behind the words.

READING I Amos is often referred to as "the prophet of justice." In the face of the blatant injustice of the wealthy and powerful in Israel, Amos urged, "let justice surge like water, and goodness like an unfailing stream" (5:24). Prophesying for only one year, around 760 bc, Amos saw harsh treatment of the poor of the land, while the wealthy—including king, priests, and other supposedly religious people—appeared self-satisfied and complacent. Today's reading is a clear example of the attitudes and actions that Amos so abhorred.

LECTIONARY #135

READING I Amos 8:4–7

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Amos

**Hear this, you who trample upon the needy
and destroy the poor of the land!**
"When will the new moon be over," you ask,
"that we may sell our grain,
and the sabbath, that we may display the wheat?
We will diminish the ephah,
add to the shekel,
and fix our scales for cheating!
We will buy the lowly for silver,
and the poor for a pair of sandals;
even the refuse of the wheat we will sell!"
The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
Never will I forget a thing they have done!

The prophet presents a vivid picture. The unjust actions of his audience involve more than simply ignoring those who are poor and needy. Their injustice is equivalent to trampling the poor into the earth so completely that it destroys them. In his first indictment against Israel, Amos had already set the scene with the same image: "They trample the heads of the weak into the dust of the earth, and force the lowly out of the way" (2:7). What makes their actions even more egregious is the pseudo-religious lifestyle of the wealthy. They seem to regard their participation in

feasts and prayers as an indication that they are in right relationship with God. But Amos announces the word of the Lord against them: "I hate, I spurn your feasts, I take no pleasure in your solemnities" (5:21).

The prophecy we hear today illustrates well why the Lord would take no pleasure in the religious observances of those who exploited the poor. The celebration of the new moon at the beginning of each month included feasting and sacrifices. Since no work was permitted on the new moon or Sabbath, the wealthy merchants were eager for the days to be over

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 113:1-2, 4-6, 7-8 (see 1a, 7b)

**R. Praise the Lord who lifts up the poor.
or Alleluia.**

Praise, you servants of the LORD,
praise the name of the LORD.
Blessed be the name of the LORD
both now and forever.

He raises up the lowly from the dust;
from the dunghill he lifts up the poor
to seat them with princes,
with the princes of his own people.

High above all nations is the LORD;
above the heavens is his glory.
Who is like the LORD, our God, who is
enthroned on high
and looks upon the heavens
and the earth below?

READING II 1 Timothy 2:1-8

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy

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.**

**This is good and pleasing to God our savior,
who wills everyone to be saved
and to come to knowledge of the truth.**

For there is one God.

**There is also one mediator between God and men,
the man Christ Jesus,
who gave himself as ransom for all.**

This was the testimony at the proper time.

**For this I was appointed preacher and apostle
—I am speaking the truth, I am not lying—,
teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.**

**It is my wish, then, that in every place the men should pray,
lifting up holy hands, without anger or argument.**

Beloved = bee-LUHV-uhd

With urgency, you are giving instructions.
Speak with authority.

Don't rush the benefits of praying for our
leaders.

God expects us to pray. Speak in a
gentler tone.

This is the instruction of a loving teacher.

God gave him this responsibility that all might
be saved.

End softly and humbly, calling for prayer that
is characterized by the peace you pray for.

so they could begin their cheating again. They used their scales both to falsify the weight of produce and to determine the price. Then, having further impoverished the needy, they plan to sell them into servitude, in violation of the Torah itself (Leviticus 25:36ff.).

The final verse is a sharp and frightening warning: the Lord will not forget what these people have done.

READING II The second reading opens and closes with Paul urging that prayer be offered for everyone and in

every place. Just as Jesus had instructed his disciples how to pray, Paul instructs Timothy how the community under his leadership should pray when they are gathered for worship. In the first-century context of the Roman Empire, praying for kings and all in authority means praying for those who have power over the Christian community, who can threaten and persecute them. Praying for such powerful political figures has a twofold purpose. First, it contributes to a quiet and tranquil life by publicly attesting that, far from opposing the

emperor and others in government, Christians respect and even pray for them.

Second, praying for those with political power springs from Jesus' own prayer and mission. He taught his disciples, "Pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). His very reason for coming into the world is "that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17). Jesus' prayer and mission put kings and emperors (as well as political leaders today) in their proper place. Like all the rest of humanity, they are under God's rule and God's will to save.