

# Homily for the 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 21-22, 2019

Readings: Amos 8:4-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; Luke 16:1-13

Preacher: Sr. Barbara Moore RSM

Today's Gospel is a fascinating story about a rich man's steward who found himself in trouble. On one level he was abusing those over whom he exercised power. He may have been skimming off the top of their debts for his own use, or asking more from them than he should have demanded. He was also creating some kind of conflict among his peers who then reported him to the rich man.

And the rich man found that he was losing money at the hands of his manipulative steward. The steward was trying to protect himself by reducing what the debtors owed. Now that had to delight the debtors, but further showed the craftiness of the steward. This parable on many levels is a first century economic nightmare.

Jesus uses the familiar when he shared parables. My guess is that his audiences experienced much of what was revealed in this story. This story is followed by the parable about the rich man and Lazarus. One wonders if Luke was trying to address a particular need in the community and thus, these two parables. Money, service, compassion, honesty and trust are all themes of these stories.

Jesus shares two powerful statements in this Gospel. "The person who is trustworthy in very small matters, is also trustworthy in great ones." And, "No servant can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and mammon."

Recent court cases against pharmaceutical companies regarding addictive drug use and availability of such drugs comes to my mind as I read this parable. Marketing, targeting and prescribing these drugs have caused havoc and loss of life. These are "great matters" and they have had a devastating effect on so many people. The dishonesty of the steward in this Gospel seems to be all around us these days as lies fill the public sector,

and false information is publicly shared. And the average man and woman suffers as did the debtors in this parable.

A hierarchy is revealed in this parable. At the top, a rich man who needs the help of another to manage his money and property. And then those at the bottom who feel the impact of their manager's dishonesty. But there is a positive aspect to the story because someone alerted the rich man to the manager's dishonesty. An ancient "whistle blower." A truth teller or at least someone who had had it with the manager's greed, acted!

Today, truth telling and honesty are qualities that are needed in systems that impact our lives. The manager could cover up his misbehavior. Perhaps the rich man had hints but did not act until it became public. This cover up or use of bad decisions has been found in both church and government these days. And it is critical that light and truth are brought to these situations.

For it is in daily "small matters" that we are called to be "trustworthy." If that behavior is part of our lives, we will have the courage to address the "great matters" as they arise. And we will grow into people whose values and heart are drawn to the values and heart of Jesus Christ.

Amen