26th Sunday in O.T. 2025

The Prophet Amos, whom we encounter in today’s first reading, lived about seven hundred and fifty years before Christ. While it was a time of prosperity and peace in his land, Amos recognised a rottenness at the core of his society - the rich were growing richer, and the poor, poorer. Values, particularly religious values, were ignored or had been entirely forgotten. Indeed, as we read the prophecies of Amos, we cannot but be struck by just how contemporary they are. He speaks of the wealthy sprawling on their luxurious beds, *“they dine on lambs….and stall-fattened veal”*, bawling *“to the sound of the harp”,* while *“they drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest oil for anointing themselves” –* all without a care for anyone else. Amos paints a picture of those, he refers to as *“ensconced so snugly”,* as living, not only a heartless existence, but a superficial one; one which had no values other than those of self-interest.

Some years ago, I was reading, or rather rereading, a book called “Journal of a Soul”. It is a collection of jottings charting the spiritual journey of a priest called Angelo Roncalli, better known as Pope John XX111. In November 1940, Roncalli was on retreat, and in his journal, he noted something which gave me quite a jolt. He wrote, “I have chosen these particular days for my retreat because they are the first of my sixtieth year. I am now entering that period in which a man begins to be old and admits it”. It was perhaps a coincidence, but it so happened that, at the time I was reading Roncalli’s words, I was also in the first few days of my sixtieth year – hence the jolt!

Although, at that time, I was hesitant to admit that I was beginning to be old, nevertheless, common sense, or perhaps The Holy Spirit, prevailed, and I resolved, not only to think about, but to write down, those core convictions which, I believe, are the anchors in my life and my faith. This exercise, I felt, would prevent my faith from becoming superficial, and my ministry, that of a mere ecclesiastical functionary. In the beginning, my thoughts were a bit scattered and wordy, however, each year, during Lent, I have returned to my notes, and gradually, those thoughts have grown more personal, and more deeply rooted in my heart – however, as it must, this practice remains a work in progress.

But what then are the anchors in your life, as a spouse, as a parent, as a professional person, or as a retired person? Which core convictions anchor you to your life of faith? Important questions in life might be: “Who am I, really? What am I searching for? What direction do I want to give to my life, my decisions and my actions? Why and for what purpose am I in this world? How do I want to look back on my life once it ends? What meaning do I want to give to all my experiences? Who do I want to be for others? Who am I for God?” *(Dilexit Nos, 8).*

Today’s Gospel passage confronts us with that which is surely a core conviction for a Christian. Jesus told a parable, which at first sight appears to be only a moral tale about riches and poverty - the heartlessness of the wealthy man and the wretchedness of the poor man. Although that understanding is contained within the parable, Jesus was confronting his hearers with something even more profound. He declared, *“they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead”.* Let each one ask, “Is belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ a core conviction in my life?”

The pressures and stresses of daily life, together with the distractions and complexities of modern life, not to mention the many temptations that abound today, can easily detach a person from those moorings of traditional values and religious faith. The result can be, that, when tossed on the turbulent sea of life, many grasp for those things which appear to offer stability and security but are in fact transient and superficial. In another one of Jesus’ parables, the wealthy man who needed to build bigger barns in which to store his possessions, said to himself, *“‘you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time’. But God said to him, ‘Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; this hoard of yours, whose will it be then?’”*

In today’s Gospel passage, Jesus, looking at the Pharisees around him, recognised that they had so slipped from their moorings of tradition and faith, that they were now merely culturally religious, quite unable to see the hand of God at work in life – they would not be convinced*“even should someone rise from the dead”.*

*“My friends,*

*let us keep firm in the hope we profess,*

*because the one who made the promise is faithful.*

*Let us be concerned for each other,*

*to stir a response in love and good works.*

*Do not stay away from the meetings of the community,*

*as some do, but encourage each other” (Hebrews 10:23-25).* **Amen.**