

25th Sunday (C)

- From the prophet Amos in the 8th century before Christ, to Jesus time, to our own day, justice has been & continues to be an ongoing problem in our relationships with one another & with our world.
- In the first reading Amos condemns those who cheat the poor by giving short measure & warns them that this behaviour will result in divine retribution.
- Paul in writing to Timothy, among many other things gives advice about praying for others & especially the appropriateness of praying for civic leaders, some of who must have been anti-Christian.
- His response is simple & straightforward: Christians seek the salvation & the good of everyone & therefore it is important to pray for our leaders especially because their actions have such a great influence on society.
- Then in the Gospel we have the Parable of the Astute Manager, who knowing he is about to be sacked, discounts the debt of his master's debtors.
- Jesus isn't praising his deceit, but his shrewdness.
- He is saying that we Christians should be just as shrewd in relation to the things of the Kingdom - so often we are timid & ignorant with regard to the things of faith.
- There are many people who, although they are in important jobs & are experts in several fields, are quite uninformed & naive when it comes to matters of their religious faith & yet the call to exercise justice is a fundamental aspect of Christian Faith & is written about extensively.
- Christ is saying that we should put just as much effort into understanding our faith as we do into mastering the skills & fields of study that we need to carry out our profession - this is something that is becoming increasingly important.
- Spiritual matters are not just the domain of the clergy; they are the concern of all of us & especially parents who take on the responsibility of baptizing their children & raising them in Christian faith.
- One of the hallmarks of modern society is that we don't really trust experts to advise us while we are kept in ignorance.
- Nowadays people search the Internet before they go to the doctor; people consult Google before they talk to their insurance broker; they ask everyone they know about which might be the best school for their children.
- This is not because we disrespect professionals but because we want to have an informed discussion with them; we want their expert help to enable us to come to the right decisions & to do this it is better if we come to them with the right questions & know in advance the possible pitfalls.
- In relation to our faith we surely have a similar responsibility to inform ourselves – the Plenary Council begun in Australia in 2020 has been a current opportunity & responsibility.
- Our relationship with God is more important than anything else, whether we acknowledge it or not, & if that relationship is to flourish, then it is important that we are well-informed about our faith in areas such as the teachings of the Church, the ways of prayer, the challenges for the Church, & us as its members

to be authentic in living out the teachings of Jesus, & to develop a deeper appreciation of the ways God works in my life & in the world's affairs.

- This was something that Cardinal John Henry Newman in the 19th century was passionate about.
- He understood that the religious education of the laity was vital for everyone.
- He understood that the doctrine of the Church was not the possession of the bishops & priests & that while development of doctrine was essential it could not be done without the consent of the vast mass of the faithful.
- He wrote in 1859 a controversial article entitled "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine", to state the right & responsibility of the Laity to participate in the decision-making of Church authority.
- My point is to stress that it is quite strange that people can be highly competent & well informed regarding matters of their own professions & trades but quite immature in matters of religion & faith, & it's remarkable how some very intelligent, highly developed professionals have extraordinarily distorted understandings of their faith, the Church & ultimately, God.
- I believe that it is as important to study & inform ourselves about our Catholic Christian faith as it is to be up to date in our secular profession.
- Newman was an effective educator, a great teacher & he was interested in change.
- But change is not easy & most of us tend to avoid change whenever it presents itself. One of Newman's most well known sayings is this: "To live is to change, & to be perfect is to have changed often."
- He understood that in order for us to make progress we have to frequently change our mindset, while remaining all the time true to our fundamental Christian principles - maintaining the balance between the need for constant change in our lives & the maintenance of the eternal truths of the Gospel is central to the life of every Christian.
- It comes from the very essence of Christian discipleship; each day we are confronted by the challenge of the Gospel – all of us who call ourselves Christian - we are challenged to reform our lives, to grow in our faith & to deepen the love we have for everyone through the way we love Christ.
- There is therefore no room for inertia or passivity in the life of a Christian.
- The eternal truths are not some inanimate or block of stone handed on from one generation to the next, but have a certain dynamic quality that stems from the very fact that they are eternal.
- The world changes & so does our reaction to it, but our response is informed by these truths which are ever ancient, ever new.
- The Gospel & the readings do not provide us with a formula or a program to change the world of the injustices that are practiced, but they do provide us with a call & an opportunity to change our attitudes that we might adopt the right attitude to whatever circumstances in our lives, relationships & in the world demand of us to act in a way that puts into practice the mind of Christ & effects change in the world's affairs.