

## Sunday Homily Sept.18

Today's readings remind us that we are God's stewards, and that God expects faithful and prudent stewardship from us. They challenge us to use our God-given talents and blessings, like wealth, wisely to attain Heavenly bliss.

In the first reading, Amos, the prophet of social justice, condemns the crooked business practices of the 8th century BC Jewish merchants of Judea and reminds the Israelites and us to be faithful to our Covenant with Yahweh, God of Justice. We need to practice justice and mercy to all, as God's faithful stewards. Amos warns us also against setting making money by any means as the goal of our life. In the second reading, St. Paul instructs the first century Judeo-Christians to become true stewards of the Gospel of Jesus, the only mediator, by preaching the "Good News" to the pagans and by including them in intercessory prayers, too.

Today's Gospel story tells us about the crooked, but resourceful, manager and challenges us to use our blessings — time, talents, health and wealth — wisely and justly so that they will serve us for our good in eternity. We use our earthly wealth wisely when we spend it for our own needs in moderation and when we love and help the needy around us, because these are the purposes for which God has entrusted His blessings to us.

Let the children of light acquire the prudence of the children of this world (verse 8). The steward in the parable was a dishonest rascal who had been put in charge of his master's estate. His master was probably a Palestinian landlord residing in a large city. When caught red-handed for misappropriation of profits, the steward cleverly falsified the entries in the account books so that the debtors appeared to owe far less than their actual debt. The steward knew that when his master fired him, he would need friends. His dishonest plan would serve two purposes. First, the debtors would be grateful to him and would support him financially. Second, he would be in a position to exercise a little judicious blackmail to silence them if that became "necessary."

Obviously, Jesus was not commending the steward's dishonesty. He was commending only his shrewd resourcefulness. The parable points out that Christians should be as prudent and resourceful in acquiring goodness as the

steward was in acquiring money and making his future safe. Christians must give as much attention to things that concern their souls as they do to the things that concern worldly matters. In saving our souls and spreading the Good News, our Lord wants us to apply the same ingenuity and effort that other people put into their worldly affairs or into their attempts to attain some human ideal. In other words, our Christianity will begin to be real and effective when we spend as much time and effort on spiritual matters as we do on worldly activities, and when the Church uses the worldly business sense of a good steward in conducting its ministries.

1) We need to be faithful in the little things of life: Let us remember Saint John Chrysostom's warning, "Faithfulness in little things is a big thing," and the reminder of St. Theresa of Calcutta, "Do little things with great love." Hence, let us not ignore doing little things, like acknowledging a favor with a sincere "thank you," congratulating others for their success, sharing in their sorrows and/or offering them help and support in their needs.

2) We need to use our spiritual resources wisely. The manager in Jesus' story used all his resources to secure his future. We must be no less resourceful. We have at our disposal the Holy Mass and the Seven Sacraments as sources of Divine grace, the Holy Bible as the word of God for daily meditation and practice, and the teaching authority of the Spirit-guided Church to direct us in our Christian life. We need to use these resources in such a way that it will be said of us, "And the master commended them because they acted so prudently."

3) We need to be prepared to give an account of our stewardship. We insure our houses against fire, storms, flood, and thieves, just as we insure our lives, buying life insurance, health insurance, and car insurance. In the same way, let us "insure" ourselves (with God, not Prudential!) for the one thing that most certainly will happen, namely, our meeting God to give Him an account of our lives. What really matters, at that time of our Private Judgment by God at the moment of our death is how wisely we have used our blessings during our life, lovingly and generously sharing them with others in need.