25 C 2025

Today’s Scripture readings declare that we are Christian. While we live in a world that isn’t, we should be compelled to reveal our being Christian, even more so, being Franciscan, in our words, deeds and actions.

In today’s first reading, Amos, the prophet of social justice, excoriates the people who destroy the poor when they practice injustice and greed to make a profit, sell the laborer short, endanger peoples’ lives, and make people no more than indentured servants. Even at worship all they think about is how to make more money, in unjust ways. God will not forget what they have done to the poorest and the least. What does God see us doing?

Society is immersed in the material and social dimensions of life that committed people find no time to open their minds to the spiritual. Have they lost their soul? The soul is the true self that finds itself grounded in God. Transformed, it thrives in communion with all of creation, yet it can be seriously threatened by materialism.

When Jesus says, *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,”* material goods are not evil in themselves. They are necessary for life. They are meant to be shared. It is immoral for a portion of the world to become rich at the expense of the poorer segments of the earth. “Treasures in heaven” is not some rich platitude. God’s kingdom will ultimately rule on earth. “Treasures in heaven” are things of worth in the coming of the kingdom: justice, respect for the dignity of every person, equal opportunities for migrants and minorities to be productive. It implies that we would do better to invest in activities that transform life, rather than in securities that protect accumulated surplus. Pope Leo has already spoken to this. He calls for a major rethinking of our economic system so that the poor and the poorest nations may have a more equitable share of the goods of life.

It didn’t take long for Pope Leo XIV to reveal his commitment to the Church’s social justice tradition. It his short time as Pope, Leo referenced Leo XIII’s encyclical on the social needs of people. The Church’s Doctrine of Social Teaching reaches its high point in Vatican II’s document *Gaudium et Spes*, indicating a continuation of efforts to address issues of poverty, inequality, and exploitation, giving a voice to the poor, recognizing their perspectives as crucial for understanding the world through a divine lens.

The late Pope Francis calls the world’s attention by addressing injustice and systematic inequalities in his “social encyclicals:” in *Fratelli Tutti* the Pope spoke on social friendship that can build a better, more fraternal, just and peaceful world; in *Laudato Si’,* the Pope addressed environmental justice, arguing that environmental degradation harms the poor and vulnerable most severely, that caring for our common home is a part of social justice; and in *Evangelii Gaudium,* Pope Francis critiques the prevailing model that increases wealth for some while increasing inequality and poverty for others.

Is it wrong, then, to have a retirement portfolio, or even to care about the material things of this world for ourselves or for others? I spy a “yes and no” answer. The answer “no” comes from the fact that this passage is one of several in the Scriptures addressing questions of wealth and provision for dependent individuals. The “yes” part is a warning, summed up as, *“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”* Money changes the heart more than the heart decides how to handle money. Possessions change individuals when material things are cared for more than people and other things.

When we show we are concerned for the under-advantaged, we resemble the manager who disposed of his material goods in an enlightened way. He did it to get along in life. Today’s Gospel is not a rule for portfolio management. It does tell us that our commitment to the ways and means of God’s kingdom extends to how we manage the wealth as we have.

We are called to be more compassionate and loving, decisively. Are we not the *“children of light?”* Have we not learned as much from the “children of the world?” Let the Gospel and the Church’s social agenda be our way of life. Let our Rule direct us.