

# ***Do Something!***

*At a coffee social after a Sunday morning Mass at a suburban parish, a parishioner complained to one of the teens hosting the event about a homeless man who was stashing donuts into the pockets of his oversized coat.*

*“You should do something about that!” the older parishioner said, pointing at the intruder.*

*The teenager went to the refreshment table, gathered up the remaining donuts, placed them in one of the boxes they had come in, and handed the box to the homeless man saying, “We’re here every Sunday morning.” The man smiled broadly, thanked the teen, and shuffled out of the hall.*

*The teenager went back to the complaining parishioner and said, “That’s what you meant when you said ‘Do something’ wasn’t it? \**

The heinous crime that aroused the wrath of the prophet Amos, the great sin of the Gospel parable, and, I dare say, the sin of our contemporary culture is not only a refusal to recognize the poor in our midst, but also the deliberate avoidance of any interaction with the reality of their poverty. It's about failing to do something. Whatever the particular historical

circumstances, it is clear that being so possessed by possessions blinds people to the needs of others.

What is it that we are willing to do? Sit around like the rich man in the parable? I doubt any of us would knowingly choose that course of action. We would say that if Lazarus were at our doorstep we would react with compassion and understanding. We would lift him up, because "the gifts we have we are given to share" -- that is the hymn we sing, right? We would never react like the "parishioner" who seemed to be shutting out someone in need.

Well, either the world has been miraculously transformed since the time of Amos and Jesus--or, for that matter, since we came to this liturgy--or we've been deluding ourselves. Though I'll be accused of being political, I will nonetheless state that I have pretty much given up on all political movements—new and old. So, though the issues I'm about to offer may be "political," they are not partisan.

Urban education, health care, immigration and care of the elderly, versus tax breaks for the wealthy sounds a little like Lazarus and the rich man, don't you think? We have to stop this polarization when it comes to the health, education, welfare and equality of our brothers and sisters. Fiscal responsibility according to the Sacred Scriptures is about helping those in need! Otherwise the judgments of Amos and Abraham will find their way to our doorsteps.

Today we are blessed to have a Pope who is clearly focused on Lazarus in today's world in his call for a "poor church for the poor." His appeal to the entire People of God is to collaborate in bringing about a world of peace and justice. He is clearly hoping that we put aside the labels and the petty vitriol that prevent us from being focused on building the City of God.

It is hard to escape the implications these Scriptures offer for this time in human history. We gather here to listen to what we believe is God speaking to our experience through the experience of those who penned those Scriptures. Who are we in those stories? Is Amos speaking about us?

Is Jesus' parable for us? As we celebrate this Eucharist, the sacrament of Christ's total self-giving love for all, what is being asked of us? Are we here simply to be comforted by that sacrament and the love it expresses? Or are we also here to be nourished by that Word and Sacrament so we can go from here to witness that same self-giving love in our lives?

If we see our brothers and sisters in need, will we have the courage and the compassion of that teenager who responded to the parishioner's call to "do something" by **DOING SOMETHING?**

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