

25th Sunday (C)

21st September 2025

‘Prayer for those in authority’

Amos 8: against those who swindle the poor

Ps 112: *from the dungheap He raises the poor*

1Tim 2: *there should be prayers offered ... for kings and others in authority*

Lk 16: 1–13: *the children of this world are more astute than children of the light*

Jesus’s parable, there, about the ‘dishonest manager’ raises all sorts of questions. It’s one of Our Lord’s subtler parables, and maybe demands more unpacking. What is it He’s commending to us? — not *dishonesty*, clearly; but a keenness of attention to the things of heaven with the sort of effort that we often only seem to give to the things of this world. This, and the whole question of our personal use of money, that “unrighteous wealth,” are matters that are very important, whether we are cash-strapped students, or are now in good jobs where we now have rather more money in our bank account. As Christians we do need a clear moral guide as to the right use of money, especially if and when we start to have more and earn more; what do I spend on myself, and what do I make *better* use of, giving to others and “winning friends in heaven?” Important though these matters are, they can wait for another day; I want to look at another part of this Sunday’s Scripture.

I am drawn today more particularly to the words of the 2nd Reading, St Paul encouraging and counselling his protégé, St Timothy, in his work as a bishop (of Ephesus, we believe). “*First of all,*” says St Paul, “*I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high position, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.*” How important this is, at this moment in time, and perhaps at all times. *There should be prayers offered for those in authority.* And I don’t mean in some vague sense, but at the moment I really think that these are times in which we should pray in a concerted and deliberate and fervent way for those in national and international political life. There seems all sorts of factioning and fracturing of any consensus in our national political life; some of that obviously still has its origins in fault lines that grew with our having exited the European Union; but other key areas of friction are current questions of the economy, taxation, welfare and immigration; not to mention the vexed and critical pro-life questions of

abortion & euthanasia (the latter, especially, with the present debates in the House of Lords). But, surely, *as Christians, as those listening to Our Lord Jesus and His holy apostles*, we should be responding to this with prayer: full-on, daily, appeals in prayer to the Lord for His gifts of grace — patience, wisdom and understanding — rallying heaven and the saints of heaven to our aid at this time of such political turmoil, national & international feelings of being so unsettled. Whatever our political persuasion, and whatever our opinions on, and whether or not we are fans of the current administration, yet what matters is that we pray for our Government; that we pray for our King and our Prime Minister; that we pray for all the Civil Servants and Government officials involved in tricky and complex questions of governance, and of international diplomacy, at this delicate time. I think that we should back their efforts up with our prayers. We are not in the corridors of power; we are not at those peace-negotiating tables; we are not always in a position to add our penn'orth into the mix, except at the ballot box and in occasional communications

to MPs and Lords; but *we are able to plead with God*, and to urge the prayers of English saints like St Thomas More (patron saint of statesmen and politicians) and St John Henry Newman (our Chaplaincy patron St), to bring about resolution and reconciliation. No political outcomes are ever going to be the favourite choice of all, that's obvious, but a negotiated outcome, in which as many lives, jobs, emotions, are felt to have been included in the equation — factored into policies — as possible, is surely what we should be praying for. We can play our part, as Christians who care about this country of ours, and who want this nation to be a fair and just one to those born here and to those many others who have made it their home. We can pray — *we should* pray, and we should pray precisely since it the thing we are given to do as inheritors of the sacred tradition of England as a people with a 1500-yr history of Christianity and a long-standing tradition of love for Our Lady. Prayer should come naturally to us for King and country, for Government and “those in authority.”

Some of us were in Walsingham yesterday, the national shrine of Our Lady, dating from 1061AD, before even the Norman Conquest! To be in such a place of national Christian antiquity, as Fr Francis the youth chaplain who travelled with us pointed out — to walk the Holy Mile where millions of other pilgrims down through the past 10 centuries have done — is to remind ourselves of the endurance of faith in God and in the assistance of Our Blessed Mother, and its having outlasted all sorts of kingly dynasties and various forms of Government! It was a deep and affirming reminder that the Gospel endures, whilst political parties, policies, and problems come and go. It's a deeply engrained thing, in this country of ours, that Christ is honoured, and Parliament, in both Houses, offers prayers at the start of each day's official business. We can play our part in that. Some of you, please God, will get involved in the national political life of this country (or your own country). It's important. We've seen in recent days — in many speeches in the House of Lords opposing assisted suicide — the difference that believers

can make in the national debate about things that really matter very much: I think of the speeches of Theresa May, former PM, and of the Anglican Archbishop of York, amongst others. But for those of us who sometimes might feel on the sidelines of these debates, we can and should keep them in our prayers.

We should invoke the intercession of Our Lady of Walsingham; St Thomas More; and St John Henry Newman, for the peace of this country that they loved so well. We are reminded by St Paul today that “*there is one mediator between God and men ... Christ Jesus.*” He, then, is the one to solve the crises we create for ourselves; He is the one to settle our hearts when we find ourselves in turmoil. Let's neither shrug off the current challenges, nor get down about them, but let's commit ourselves to being a powerhouse of prayer that God's Holy Spirit may buoy up and inspire our leaders and their officials to work hard for the common good, both here and abroad, to achieve fair settlements, and to bring us some political peace.

Here is a prayer that is part of the *Passion Liturgy* of Good Friday. It's one of the set of 10 great petitions in the 'Universal Prayer' that we offer as we commemorate the death of the Lord for us on the Cross, and plead with Him for the good of humanity:

A Prayer for those in Public Office

Almighty ever-living God, in whose hand lies every human heart and the rights of peoples, look with favour, we pray, on those who govern with authority over us, that throughout the whole world the prosperity of peoples, the assurance of peace, and freedom of religion may through Your gift be made secure. Amen.