

[Opinion](#)
[Spirituality](#)
[Scripture for Life](#)



Shopping carts are slowly filled with food in November 2018 as clients make their way through the food pantry operated by the Indianapolis Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. (CNS/Katie Rutter)



by Carol J. Dempsey

[View Author Profile](#)

[**Join the Conversation**](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

September 28, 2019

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

Commercial after commercial inserted into regularly scheduled programs on television channels in developed and developing nations feature myriad ways to lose weight. Protein shakes, protein bars, protein diets, treadmills, recumbent bicycles, elliptical gliders are all supposed to help shed those unwanted pounds. All of the commercials about diets, gadgets and gizmos showcased on networks are designed with the consumer in mind, as retailers hope to increase sales to boost their profits.

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

[*September 29, 2019*](#)

Amos 6:1a, 4-7

Psalm 146: 7, 8-9, 9-10

1 Timothy 6:11-16

Luke 16:19-31

What television audiences do not see is the reality of global hunger that leaves children and women, in particular, emaciated with just about enough skin to cover their fragile bones. What television sponsors do not sponsor are ways to alleviate global hunger that increases with each passing day.

The new 2019 Food Security Information Network report records that approximately 113 million people in 53 countries experienced hunger and high levels of food insecurity in 2018. Moreover, 143 million people in another 42 countries are just one step away from acute hunger.

This Sunday's readings are about hunger, both the inability to experience it and the experience of it.

In the reading from Amos, the poet invites us into the homes of the well-to-do among his community. These people live in Zion/Jerusalem, the capital city and the

urban part of the southern kingdom Judah.

Here, we see that these financially comfortable individuals have the luxury of being able to lounge around on ivory beds and lovely couches in their homes. Their palates enjoy choice meats and abundant wine. They have time to make their own music, and they have the means to anoint themselves with the best oils. They take very good care of themselves, and in their luxurious, self-indulgent state, they are complacent and unattuned to the injustices within their community.

Advertisement

The poet rails against these people's complacency. Their lifestyle anesthetizes them to the pain and suffering of others. Who knows if these comfortable ones have a hand in the plight of others' suffering?

The rest of the book of Amos suggests that they do (see, for example, Amos 8:4-6). Thus, the complacent ones are not able to experience the "hunger" for justice and righteousness because of their grandiose self-indulgent lifestyle acquired at the expense of the poor and less fortunate. The poet's issue here is not that the wealthy are wealthy. Amos takes issue with how they achieved their wealth and their unconcern for justice on behalf of those in need.

The responsorial psalm is a fitting response to the reading from Amos. The one who remains faithful to those in need is God, the sacred presence who sustains all life, especially orphans and widows, and gives food to the hungry, who frees those from the bonds of injustice, who raises up those bowed down, and who embraces the ones practicing justice.

This psalm, however, is not only for those who are disenfranchised. Embedded in the psalm is a word of hope: The God who sets captives free and gives sight to the blind is the God who is forever working in the midst of the human condition to free those who are caught up in themselves and the self-indulgence that keeps them from true hospitality of heart and generosity. They are the ones blind to the needs of others and thus blind to the demands of covenant relationship, the hallmarks of which are justice, righteousness and loving kindness. The divine works within the human condition to free all people from whatever binds them.

In the second reading from 1 Timothy, Paul addresses Timothy and encourages him to focus on his inner attitudes, to lay hold of eternal life and to keep the commandment that refers to the earlier tasks assigned to Timothy, namely, teaching and providing good leadership for the community. Timothy is to stand in stark contrast to the portrait of the self-indulgent, complacent ones described in Amos.

Interestingly, Paul's address to Timothy is steeped in kyriarchal language for Christ: King of kings, Lord of lords, who is "only ruler" to whom "honor" and "eternal power" is due. These imperialistic and hierarchical titles reflect male hegemonic thought and contrast with Paul's other description of the glorified, immortal Christ who dwells in "unapproachable light" (cf. Acts 9:1-9).

The Gospel reading from Luke sharpens the theme of hunger. The story of the poor man Lazarus and the rich man Dives shows the double sidedness of hunger. Those who hunger will be satisfied. Those who fail to respond to the hunger of others will one day hunger for compassion for themselves but will meet instead the face of indifference. Hunger affects us all.

[Carol J. Dempsey is a Dominican Sister of Caldwell, New Jersey, and professor of biblical studies at the University of Portland, Oregon.]