

### **SHARING OUR MONEY**

I don't know if you've ever been to New York? I remember my first visit, being utterly amazed seeing for the first time the stunning skyline: the whole city, a dense forest of glass and concrete skyscrapers. I once went up the World Trade Centre – that was before 9/11 – but afterwards, as we were walking around, we stumbled across something way out of place. There, just off Wall Street amidst a stand of colossal buildings, was a tiny, old red-brick house, the ancient surviving among the modern. It was open, so we looked in, but what we found was a real surprise. –Because the main room was now a chapel, and it was full of people, kneeling in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. What we'd stumbled upon was the family-home of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first native-born American to be declared a saint of the Church. There, right in the heart of capitalism, amidst the brash towers of big business, was the old and lowly shrine of a woman who'd given her life to God in service of the poor and needy.

NO SERVANT CAN BE THE SLAVE OF TWO MASTERS: YOU CANNOT BE THE SLAVE BOTH OF GOD AND MONEY. In today's liturgy, two themes come together. On the one hand, the Readings we've just heard have a stark and disturbing message: as Prophet Amos put it, God will NEVER FORGET A SINGLE THING YOU HAVE DONE, you who TRAMPLE ON THE NEEDY, who swindle and cheat others, who feather your own nest. Jesus warns us in the Gospel about becoming absorbed with materialism: YOU CAN'T BE THE SLAVE OF TWO MASTERS. YOU CANNOT BE THE SLAVE BOTH OF GOD AND MONEY. This message blends with our Harvest Thanksgiving, which reminds us that everything in life we have is God's gift: creation, food and drink, money, property, health and wealth. All is gift. Yet the key principle is this: you and I are stewards of those gifts. For everything we have comes from God, and he's given it to us not only for our own good but also for the service of God's Kingdom. It's not wrong to be rich. It's not wrong to better oneself. But we are stewards: all we have is for His service. That is why the richer we are, the greater our responsibility.

In 1995 Pope John Paul II spoke to the UN. He acknowledged the crisis in the world with its unjust structures and gross inequalities between rich and poor. But this crisis, he said, was caused by the Western world's loss of the sense of God. Take away God and morality crumbles: it's no longer clear what it means to be human; so people become prey to selfishness, materialism and hedonism. That forest of NY skyscrapers symbolises our enthralling secular culture, yet what really counts in life is not them, but that old, lowly shrine of God, easily overlooked. For every human being wants to be happy in life, yet happiness is impossible without a personal relationship with God. This is why real poverty is not just material; it's spiritual; it's the loss of the sense of God, something we see big-time in Britain today. As Catholics, especially as disabled and differently-abled

Catholics, you and I have a clear humanitarian mission: to reach out to others, to touch them with love and joy, to offer them the Good News of Christ, the full truth about God and about being human.

YOU CANNOT BE THE SLAVE BOTH OF GOD AND OF MONEY. In this Mass, let us thank God for the harvest, and for everything we enjoy in life. But let's be daring. Dare to offer God everything. Dare to place on the altar, for his service, everything you have, your life, your heart, your wealth and all, so that like St. Elizabeth Ann Seton you can leave Mass today, renewed and ready to serve him in whatever way he wants.