

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

I picked up some groceries at the market this weekend, so I now have fresh fruits and vegetables in my fridge. Meanwhile, in Washington, the House of Representatives is debating a proposal to cut \$40 billion from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps. The bishops of the State of Missouri are encouraging Catholics to contact their representatives to oppose cuts to SNAP. If government funding is reduced, parishes, charities, food banks, pantries, and other emergency food providers could not meet the need for food assistance. Bishop Stephen Blair is the chair of the US Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development. He wrote earlier this month, "The faith community and the private sector are vital in the fight to combat hunger. But government has an indispensable role in safeguarding and promoting the common good of all. This includes ensuring that poor and hungry people have access to adequate and nutritious food." So before I put into my fridge the food I got at the market, I sent a message to my representative in congress.

St. John Chrysostom famously said, "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs."

The poor steward we meet in the gospel is dishonest, and yet his employer praises his prudence. The rich people we meet in the first reading are dishonest and imprudent - Amos says, they "trample upon the needy and destroy the poor of the land." A complaint often heard from the poor is that they suffer injustice. They are trying to get jobs and to improve their lives, but the system does not help them find a way.

Psalms 113 is a hymn of praise to God who is all powerful, yet looks after the poor. The refrain we sang today says it all, "Praise the Lord who lifts up the poor." The psalm paints a picture of God who is high above all the nations, but makes himself lowly to look upon the earth. He is enthroned on high, but he lifts up the poor to enthrone them with princes. This is not a God who is content to be on high; this is a God who cares for the poor.

If you ever volunteer at a food pantry or a soup kitchen, one of the ways you can help is to visit with the people who come there. Treat them like fellow human beings, the way you would reach out to friends who are down on their luck. If you think about it, we've all received food from the hands of other people - in their homes, or when someone dies, or delivered from their gardens. Every human being has a right to food. We can lift up the hungry and enthrone them at tables with us. We can pick up a phone or email congress to say we'd like our tax dollars to help the people we cannot feed alone.