

30th Sunday A (Matt 22:34-40)

Most of us go shopping at our local supermarkets. At the check stand, the covers of the magazines loom out at us, sometimes invitingly, the National Enquirer and others. There are the faces of the rich and famous- and beautiful. Does it seem that they live in a different world than you and I? Movie stars, athletic heroes, supermodels, CEOs of Fortune 500 companies? They have personal trainers and plastic surgeons to keep that young look. They can buy the most trend-setting clothes, live in the most exotic homes, travel in the greatest luxury. And when they speak out, there is always someone close by with a microphone. Their words seem more important than everyone else's. Their lives seem to be lived on a grander scale. In short, they are not like the rest of us. Or are they?

The message in our first reading from Exodus is simply this: never forget you are just like everyone else. We are all together in the human family. At least from God's point of view, there is no social caste system. If we forget this basic truth, we live at some moral peril. Those at the top of the social system are especially prone to this moral amnesia. God's remedy for the powerful and wealthy? Look at God. God's permanence will help us see how temporary is our status. God's power will help us remember how dependent we are, and God's passionate care for the powerless will help us all to remember to treat everyone in the human family... like family.

The line between insider and outsider in society is very thin. Our lines of demarcation seem quite wide and permanent; our zoning codes may keep the economic classes far apart, our treatment of the undocumented aliens may be unjust and inhuman. Perhaps the separation between them and us is an illusion. If you help out at St. Anthony's Dining Room, you may encounter a person who has lost his fortune over a few failed investments and is now destitute, and reduced to poverty. The distance from Rolex to Timex is not as far as it seems.

Because this is so, God reminds those who happen to be living in fine homes, enjoying the amenities of social acceptance and the security of wealth to look after the poor and stranger in their midst. God calls the wealthy among Israel to remember that at one time they were aliens in Egypt, and homeless in the wilderness wandering. In other words, God calls Israel to stay humble by remembering their past. Perhaps we can recall our own ancestry, when grandparents came from Ireland during the potato famine, or like my grandmother from Switzerland, to escape the poverty at that time, or if you are a depression baby, to have had your mom feed the family on \$4 a week. Remembering is important to keep us more compassionate in our care for the outcasts and poor of our world. God calls us to treat the other as we want to be treated, as a person of dignity and worth and created in God's image. God remembers and so must we. "For I am compassionate, says the Lord our God."

Al Grosskopf, S.J.