

Trillion Peso March Mass | Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Readings: Amos 8:4-7 | 1 Timothy 2:1-8 | Luke 16:1-13
La Salle Green Hills | 21 September 2025
Shared Reflection by Br. Iñigo Riola FSC
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Noong taong 2017, bilang paghahanda sa aking final vows, pinayagan ako ng aking dating Brother Visitor na magtrabaho bilang taxi driver sa Cebu sa loob ng isang buwan. Ito ay bahagi ng aking Parmenie Program kung saan inaanyahahan ang Brother na mag-fa-final vows na gumawa ng programa at kasama doon ang pagtulong sa mga kapos-palad. Sa halip na gawin ang karaniwan na pag-boboluntir sa mga center, minarapat kong makipamuhay sa mga taong kumikita ng arawan. Nais kong maranasan, kahit isang buwan lamang, kung ano ang araw-araw na buhay ng mga nagtatrabaho nang mahabang oras para lang may maihain sa mesa.

Nagmamaneho ako simula alas-singko ng umaga hanggang alas-onse ng gabi. Pagkatapos ng isang araw na pagtatrabaho, uuwi ako sa aking inuupahang kwarto sa looban ng isang eskenita. Napakainit mag-maneho ng isang lumang taxi. Sunog na sunog ang kaliwang braso ko matapos ang buong araw. May mga mababait na pasahero, mayroon ding mapag-maliit. Upang mapagkasya ko ang aking pera, kalimitan ay sa mga karinderya ako kumakain kasama ang mga drayber at minimum wage workers.

Matapos ang 18 oras na pagmamaneho, kumikita lamang ako ng P400-500. Ang mga kasamahan ko namang taxi driver ay kalimitang kumikita ng P500-600 dahil sila ay mga beterano na sa daan. Gayunpaman, ang aking mga kasamahan ay kalimitang mga pamilyadong tao at kailangan nilang pagkasyahin ang kanilang kita para buhayin ang kanilang pamilya.

Isang araw, habang day-off ako, sumakay ako sa ang isang taxi para pumunta sa isang mall para magpalamig. Pinili kong mag-taxi para makakuha ng tips mula sa beteranong driver. Nabanggit ko sa nasakyan kong driver na ako rin ay isang taxi driver. Sa aming kwentuhan, nabanggit niya na nagmamaneho siya ng pitong araw sa isang linggo, walang pahinga, dahil may limang anak siyang kailangang pakainin. Bigla kong inosenteng naitanong: “nakakapag-simba ka pa ba ‘pag Linggo?” Tumahimik siya ng sandali, at naisip ko “ay maling tanong,” pagkatapos ay pabulong niyang sinabi: *“Hinaut masabtan sa Ginoo.”* “Sana maunawaan ng Panginoon.” “I hope the Lord will understand.”

In the first reading, the prophet Amos cries out against those who trample on the needy and destroy the poor of the land. The prophet does not condemn business itself; he knows commerce is necessary. But he condemns dishonest trade and profit that disregard human lives. The Lord promises He will not forget these injustices.

When I think of that taxi driver, I see a man who works honestly but is a victim of a system that does not allow him to celebrate the Sabbath. We know that the Lord hears the cry of the poor. I hope that God hears the taxi driver's quiet prayer: "I hope the Lord will understand."

In the second reading, St. Paul urges us to pray for everyone, especially for those in authority, so that we may live "quiet and tranquil lives in all devotion and dignity."

The result of good governance should be a life of dignity for all: a life that allows rest, worship, and proper meals with family. Our prayer today is that our national leaders create conditions where no father or mother has to work seven days a week just to feed their children. When I recall the driver's words, I believe that St. Paul is asking us to pray precisely so that people like the taxi driver can live a peaceful and restful life with dignity.

Our gospel today is a challenging parable to understand. At first, it sounds like the master praises dishonesty. But Jesus is not commending corruption; He is highlighting the steward's urgency.

The parable says: "Make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." What does it mean? It means wealth is temporary. It will fail. *Hindi natin madadala ang mamahaling sasakyan o magandang payong sa langit.* The important thing is how we use wealth and resources: to serve the poor and to build God's Kingdom on earth.

When I think of that taxi driver, I hear Jesus asking us: how are we holding accountable the people who have been entrusted with public funds, so that people like the taxi driver can live a life of dignity? If we are faithful stewards and act with urgency, maybe one day that man can rest on Sundays and bring his family to Mass.

This is why corruption is a grave sin. The recent flood control scandal is a betrayal of trust and of stewardship. The money meant to save lives was stolen. Jesus says: "The person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones." Corruption grows like a weed. Unfortunately, it is the poor who suffer the most. We are wearing white today not just as a sign of protest, but as an invitation to live in the light and share the light: to reject corruption and to demand accountability.

Corita Kent, a former nun and prominent American artist and activist, once said: "It is a huge danger to pretend that awful things do not happen. But you need enough hope to keep going. Flowers grow out of darkness."

That taxi driver's hope, that God hopefully understands, is the same hope we hold today. Live Jesus in our hearts, forever.