

# TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Amos = AY-m\*s

An exhortatory reading from one of the minor Prophets, Amos, whom we don't encounter very often in the lectionary. And it's a classic! It consists mostly of lyrically charged accusations toward the hedonists in Zion.

anoint = uh-NOYNT

The reading concludes with the Lord's intention to punish these sinners for their excesses.

revelry = REV-uhl-ree

## READING I

In the first half of the eighth century BC, Israel enjoyed a period of unusual prosperity because the powerful nations of Assyria to the north and Egypt to the south were too preoccupied with internal problems to expand their territory. But in the second half of the century, this situation changes as the Assyrian armies move toward Israel. In this passage, Amos declares that they will conquer God's people because Israel's leaders indulge

## LECTIONARY #138

READING I Amos 6.1a, 4-7

A reading from the book of the Prophet Amos.

**Thus says the Lord, the God of hosts:**  
**"Alas for those who are at ease in Zion,**  
**and for those who feel secure on Mount Samaria!**  
**Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory,**  
**and lounge on their couches,**  
**and eat lambs from the flock,**  
**and calves from the stall;**  
**who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,**  
**and like David improvise on instruments of music;**  
**who drink wine from bowls,**  
**and anoint themselves with the finest oils,**  
**but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!**  
**Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile,**  
**and the revelry of those who lie in ease shall pass away."**

themselves and ignore their covenant responsibility to care for the needy.

The Prophet calls those in charge "at ease;" in Hebrew, *sha'anan*. The word describes people who are complacent or "feel secure" and fall into careless, intemperate habits. They lie around on expensive furniture, and dine on the costliest meats, lamb and veal. They "lounge" (Hebrew *seruchim*) on couches that are inlaid with fine ivory carvings. The picturesque parti-

ciple, *seruchim*, depicts them "sprawled"—like a piece of material draped over a couch or like the dangling branches of a wild vine. Making up songs, they fancy themselves to be musicians like David. They drink wine from "bowls" (Hebrew *mizraqim*)—probably not ordinary bowls but vessels normally used in sacred rituals (see Numbers 4.14; 7.13, 19, 37, for example). They anoint themselves with the best oils. In biblical times,

olive oil was used to cleanse the skin. Expensive brands of it were scented.

Especially egregious in the Lord's view is that Israel's leaders are not sickened by or grieving for the fall of "Joseph"—a name for the areas of northern Israel that were settled by Joseph's sons and are now threatened by the Assyrians. Because the leaders always had to be "first," the Lord declares they shall be the "first" to go into exile. Their party is over.