

Homily for the 15th Sunday of the Year

Priest and prophet clash at famous religious shrine. This could be a banner headline in a tabloid newspaper intent on making trouble, or it could be a reflection on what actually happened in our first reading some seven and a half centuries before the birth of Christ. The prophet is called Amos, a simple man but not a simpleton. He was a shepherd and tree surgeon, but more importantly open to God who called him to be a prophet, particularly about social issues, such as corruption, injustice, exploitation and the growing gap between the rich and the poor. Of these he was hyper critical.

He was sent by God to the Northern Kingdom, Israel, at the time of its greatest prosperity. But that prosperity was built on corruption and exploitation. There was an absence of justice and compassion and Amos used his prophetic talents to disturb the status quo. This is where the priest, Amaziah, comes in. He was not at pleased with what Amos was saying, because Amaziah was on the side of the rich and the powerful and he tells the prophet to go prophesy in his own country and leave them alone. Amos replies that he is not there of his own accord but because none other than God has sent him. He is not a prophet by self appointment or royal appointment but by divine appointment. Loyalty to God and to God's word was a clear priority in his life, something Amaziah had long forgotten. There is something very contemporary in this scene.

In the Gospel the 12 chosen by Jesus are now sent out. Like Amos the chosen followers of Jesus have to carry the word of God as a challenge to others. In this mission they have the authority and the power of Jesus to preach repentance, to cast out devils and to heal the sick. They have to rely on him rather than themselves, accepting whatever hospitality is offered and being willing to move on if their message remains unheard. It is God's word they are to speak and it will take them into places they might prefer not to go, but they go with the promise that they are not alone.

What is true for Amos and for the 12 is true for each of us. We are chosen by God out of love, each of us with our own unique calling. When our Eucharist is over, whether we are celebrating in person or on line, we are sent as Jesus' personal messengers. Are we willing to tell the story of Jesus by our lives? Will we travel light, trusting in Jesus' promise to be with us? What are the demons we are called to cast out, unclean spirits like addictions, militarism, environmental abuse, violence, neglect of the poor, rejection of refugees, pornography, abuse in the home, trafficking and so much more? What can we do to oppose such things that threaten to consume and destroy us? Perhaps we can begin by reminding ourselves that we are not alone and that the lighter we travel, the more conscious we are of his presence with us. We might pray for wisdom, for insight, for courage and for a simple trusting spirit in Jesus' accompanying each one of us to fulfil the tasks that have been assigned to us. We may not always be well received, we may even be openly opposed, but like Amos, the 12 and countless others through the centuries we will be bearing witness to the presence of God's reign in our world.

Bidding Prayers for the 15th Sunday

Celebrant:

Taking nothing on our journey except our trust in God, we turn to this same God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church – that it may continue its missionary role to the full by being hospitable to all, especially to the stranger and to those in need.

Lord in your mercy

For those in public office who are charged with making difficult decisions – that they will consider first those who are in most need.

Lord in your mercy

For Stella Maris (The Apostleship of the Sea) – that their support, practical and spiritual of those who work at sea, may continue to be fruitful.

Lord in your mercy

For those who are sick at home or in hospital – that they will be comforted in their illness and receive healing and hope.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Covid-19 pandemic, and Peggy Woodcock, Margaret Gowdridge, Jack Rodgers, Peter Halliwell, Ann Taylor and Brian Knox, whose anniversaries occur this week - that they and all the who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Father in heaven, you have chosen us in Christ to be holy and spotless and to become your adopted children through Jesus Christ. Hear the prayers of your children today and grant them all through Christ our Lord. Amen