

Homily for the 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
July 15, 2018  
Fr. Thomas Joseph

Today's first reading is from the *Book of the Prophet Amos* and he was quite different from most of the other prophets even in his appearance. Being sent is a commission that occurs because of God's initiative not ours. He received the message from God that he was to drop everything, cross the border into the Northern Kingdom, go to the holy city of the North, Bethel, and tell the people that they were facing destruction unless they changed their lives.

The local priest of Bethel, Amaziah, was upset that this foreigner was overstepping on his area and told him to go back to his home. He said, "*I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to a company of prophets; I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. The Lord took me from the following flock, and told me to go and proclaim His word to the People of Israel*". In writing to the Ephesians St. Paul reminds them, and us with them, that we have been chosen by God, chosen to reveal His goodness and love to all those around us.

Amos' concern was focused on the message and the one who gave him the message. He was not concerned whether or not the people were impressed with him as an individual or even whether or not they wanted to hear what God told him to proclaim.

We see the same action taking place in the Gospel reading for this Sunday. Jesus sends his disciples out to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God. These disciples were ordinary people. Jesus tells them to go and proclaim the word and then move on. If people accept the

word great, if they don't, leave quickly, but bring the word of God to the next village.

What happens today is just contrary to this. Standard procedure of our time is to get a test sampling of what people believe or want to believe and then deal with that as a truth. Today the Media tells us what they feel the majority is thinking and then treat it as though this were a truth. For example, a number of years ago a rather faulty sampling of Catholics was taken and printed by the leading newspaper of our area saying that the vast majority of Catholics do not believe in the presence of the Lord in the Eucharist. I doubt the credibility of the statement and certainly doubt the credibility of the newspaper involved, but I am deeply disturbed by the concept that Catholics should determine their faith and morals by what the majority of people is believing or doing.

The truth is not dependent on the people to whom it is addressed. The truth is dependent on the fidelity of the proclaimer to the message received by God. There was a time in history that two thirds of the Church questioned the divinity of Jesus Christ. That was the time of the Arian heresy who denied the divinity of Christ. The truth always wins. The Arian heresy had forgotten but the Church remains; she lives on believing in the divinity of Christ.

I am sure you come upon people in your neighborhood or even in your families who tell you that things have changed. Certain things which were seen as immoral before are not immoral now. I'm sure you have come upon people who tell you that it is OK for people to live together if they are not married, it is OK for people to use certain drugs, it is OK for people to ignore their responsibility to bring their children to the Eucharist on a regular basis, etc. Their message is that everyone accepts

this or that new way of living. They do not want to hear someone telling them that the majority does not determine the truth. They do not want to hear the preaching of Amos or Jesus if it goes against their desires in life.

It is our tendency to keep quiet about such things; we become blind before the truths. Like Amos, we can all claim: We don't need this. Let the priests talk about morals and attempt to practice them. I'm just an everyday person. But then we read scripture. We read the readings for this Sunday. The readings today tell us that we do not have the right to walk away from our responsibilities to the Truth. We have to stand for the truth of the Lord, whether it is popular or not, whether it is convenient or not. We have all received the mandate of Jesus to go out and proclaim his Word. Today we pray for the courage to proclaim the truth at work, in our neighborhoods and in our families.

Jesus selected a group of Twelve and sent them out to their surrounding world with a mission: to make the world a little more as Jesus wants it to be; help the world become more fervent in the Lord's service. The world must become a place where people will be able to do Jesus' work among their fellow men and women.

This work always has two dimensions. On the one hand it must help people become more committed to being closer to him as their Lord. As they develop within themselves an ever-closer relationship with him, they must strive to become more and more like him.

Jesus also gave them authority over unclean spirits. They must go among those members of the human race who control and influence what is wrong in the world. The true spirit of God will always prevent

us from looking at those different from ourselves as evil-doers or wrong in some way; an “evil spirit” always works against this.

Each one of you here in our Communion of Faith is special to God. You have a divine purpose, a God-given purpose. Each one of you in your own way stands in the shoes of the Apostles and you bear with those Apostles God’s commission; you have a share in Christ’s mission. You can bring good news to others, others who are awash and drowning in bad news. You can drive out their demons, their demons of self-rejection, of inferiority, and lack of belief in themselves.

At the end of today’s Gospel we hear St. Mark reporting: *“So they went off and preached repentance. The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.”* Many whom you know, or will yet know, are emotionally and spiritually sick. They feel degraded; they feel defeated. You can anoint them with what the bible calls “The Oil of Gladness,” the healing balm of God’s love for them.

So, you see that the mission of the Apostles is also your mission. And just as Christ’s power and love went with them, so, too, will Christ’s power and love accompany you. Always remember that this is God’s project, not yours. Remember also those words St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: *“We have been chosen by God, chosen to reveal His goodness and love to all those around us.”*

The New Evangelization we hear so much about is all about the way you live among those you live with, the way you live among those you work with, and the way you live among all the associations you have with those around you.

A little later we receive Jesus in Holy Communion... and then take Him with you into the world around you. Because you are called and sent.