

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community

15TH ORDINARY SUNDAY

Cycle B - July 11, 2021

OPENING PRAYER

Guide: *It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praise to your name, Most High.*

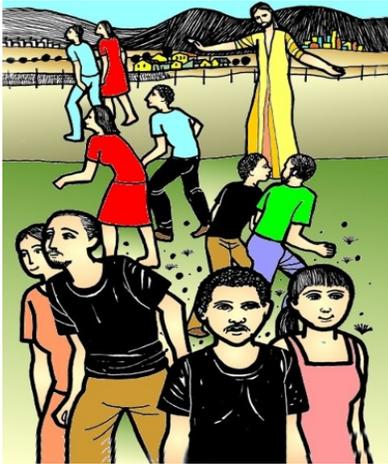
All: **The just one shall flourish like the palm tree, like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow.**

Leader: *They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.*

All: **They shall bear fruit even in old age; vigorous and sturdy shall they be.**

Guide: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send, Lord your spirit and renew the face of the earth. Oh God, that you have instructed the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us through the same spirit that always enjoy her divine consolation. By Christ, our Lord. Amen.



FIRST READING [Ezekiel 2 (2-5)]

Amaziah, priest of Bethel, said to Amos, "Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of Judah! There earn your bread by prophesying, but never again prophesy in Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary and a royal temple."

Amos answered Amaziah, "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 following the flock, and said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

The book of Amos presents us with the activity of the prophet, who although he was from Judah (southern kingdom), was destined to carry God's message to Israel (northern kingdom). Amos did not imagine that he was going to be chosen and sent by the Lord, since he was a shepherd, dedicated to raising his flock and other agricultural activities. When God chooses him, the kingdom of Israel enjoys great prosperity, but this abundance does not solve the poverty of the kingdom's population. On the contrary, social injustice is increasing. This is precisely the central motive of his preaching. It is up to Amos to denounce the oppression against the poorest, the corruption of the courts and the lack of authenticity of people dedicated to religious leadership.

The passage of this first reading probably marks the end of the prophetic activity of Amos. Amaziah was the priest responsible for Bethel, one of the official sanctuaries of the Northern Kingdom. (Remember that due to the division with Judah, where Jerusalem and its temple were located, those from the north had to "create" "holy places" like this one in Bethel). That priest turns against Amos and comes to denounce him before the king, to seek his expulsion from that territory.

Amos reacts by remembering that he is not a prophet of his own free will or of personal interest, since he was called by God to fulfill simply a mission: to remind people of his will. And it is that behind a true prophetic activity there is not a human decision, but an irresistible call that comes from God himself.

There are true and false prophets. The former have a personal agenda, they are flashy, noisy, they promote the cult of their personality, they put themselves as examples of "spiritual and pious life", they criticize those who are not like them or those who resist hovering around them. On the other hand, an authentic prophet limits himself to fulfilling the mission that God has entrusted to him without having sought it, he is discreet and the only thing he seeks is, like John the Baptist, "to decrease so that the Lord may grow" before the gaze of his town.



- (1) What are the situations of social injustice that arise where you live?
- (2) How can one act to resolve these situations?

(3) Do you recognize the danger and temptation of false prophets?

(4) By being baptized we have been consecrated as prophets. How can we improve our prophetic action?

SECOND READING [Ephesians 1 (3-14)]

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved.

In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth. In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ.

In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

The beginning of Saint Paul's letter to the Christians of Ephesus contains a kind of beautiful hymn that at the same time proclaims several truths: God the Father is the one who takes the initiative for the salvation of humanity. And that God's Plan of Salvation has its maximum exponent in Jesus Christ.

And this salvation is not reserved only for those who were waiting for the Messiah, nor for those who already know Jesus Christ. This salvation is also foreseen for those who in the future will know Jesus Christ.

Salvation is a free gift from God. It's free. That is why we call "grace" what comes to us from God to draw closer to Him, and take advantage of the fruits of Redemption. This free gift cannot remain hidden. It must be revealed to everyone, so that everyone benefits from it. Hence our responsibility not to "appropriate" this treasure, as it is our duty to make it known, because it is available to everyone. God's will is for all men to be saved.

(1) Read this text line by line. Reflect and share

GOSPEL [Mark 6 (1-6)]

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick— no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic.

He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them."

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.



The sending "two by two" corresponds to an ancient Jewish tradition, sometimes found in the Old Testament. It is a testimonial company, as well as mutual aid. The testimony and action of a team is stronger than that of an isolated individual.

Those sent receive from Jesus Christ a power to act on evil spirits. In this sense, the messenger does nothing more than carry the message of the one who sent it. There is no place for your own initiatives or personal agendas. No one has the power to drive out evil spirits but Jesus Christ. And those whom he sends receive a portion of this power. No one could do it on their own.

The instructions of Jesus Christ emphasize how important it is to place all our trust in divine Providence. The message is from the Lord. The mission belongs to the Lord. The Lord will not abandon his envoys.

Those sent do the same thing that Jesus Christ did: cast out demons and heal the sick. But these activities are not an end in themselves, but a means to favor the grasp of the main mission, which is the preaching of conversion. The reason why the followers of Christ are sent into the world is not to solve its problems, but to proclaim that the Kingdom of God is already installed in it, available to all.

* The disciples should not put their trust in "what they carry" for the mission, but in the Lord, owner of the message that is proclaimed.

* Let's not waste time convincing those who do not accept the message or retaliating against those who are reluctant to listen to us. The mission is urgent and evangelizers must continue on their way.

* Jesus Christ and his followers lived on the fringes of society, exposed to contempt and rejection.

(1) We read that the disciples of Jesus Christ "anointed the sick with oil." Read James 5:14. To whom is this sacramental activity reserved?

(2) Can anyone carry an oil to anoint the sick? What does the Word of God command?

(3) Do I receive people in my life who are in need? Have I been a cause for someone to "shake the dust off their sandals" because I have not given them the proper welcome?

(4) Do I put my trust in the "baggage" that I have accumulated during my life (career, position, properties, etc.) instead of "traveling light" trusting in the Lord?

(5) What do you think is the most necessary apostolic activity in our times and in our community?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*

Deacon José Moronta DeaconJMoronta @ stmarktampa.org

