

Discipleship Begins from the Heart

1st Reading: Am 7:12-15

2nd Reading: Eph 1:3-14 or 1:3-10

Gospel: Mk 6:7-13

GROW: I don't know about you, but even for the quickest of errands I don't like to leave my house without my smartphone. Nor would I go on a road trip without my trusty mini-Diet Coke and a snack or two. So I'm struck by what Jesus tells the Apostles when he sends them on their mission to share the Good News: "He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick – no food, no sack, no money in their belts." While it may be hard for us to imagine striking out with only the sandals on our feet, to me this reading is more about what the Apostles *did* have than what they went without: They had a companion (Jesus sent them two by two) and the spiritual blessings Saint Paul refers to, including a relationship with Jesus and absolute trust in him. Today's readings remind us to set aside distractions and spend time deepening our relationship with Jesus through prayer, reading the Scriptures, and participating in the sacramental life of the Church. In doing so, we, too, can join in the mission of the early disciples by giving our lives to Jesus and sharing his message with others.

GO: I find the phrase "the new evangelization" somewhat ironic. After all, evangelization is not new, it goes back to the earliest days of the Church, which wouldn't exist had it not been for the disciples. The "new" part reminds us that we today also share in this mission. The U.S. Catholic bishops describe it succinctly: "The New Evangelization calls each of us to deepen our faith, believe in the Gospel message and go forth to proclaim the Gospel." This call is both simple, and challenging, but we don't have to be perfect. After all, just as God called Amos, a humble shepherd, and Jesus called the Twelve, a motley group of fishermen, he calls us. Like them, our first "task" isn't a task at all – it is placing God and our relationship with Jesus at the center of our lives. Only then can we effectively share the Gospel with others, inviting our brothers and sisters to a life in Christ – to become part of God's adopted family.

WITNESS: At the end of Sunday Mass, we often hear the words: "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life." As we are sent forth, let us ask God to show us how we can share the Gospel with others during the week ahead. Then pay attention to where the Spirit leads us in answering our prayer.