

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle B 7-11-21

Amos 7: 12-15; Ephesians 1: 3-14 Mark 6: 7-13

When we heard the instructions Jesus gave to his disciples in today's Gospel, it would seem that He did not know how to pack for a trip. While most travelers try to anticipate their needs and pack accordingly, the Apostles were to travel simply. **They were to rely on nothing but another companion as they were sent out, two by two.**

Each one of us is also on a journey. It is a life-long journey. When we think about our journey through life, do we remember to think of our destination? **From the moment of our Baptism, the destination of our journey became a spiritual one. We became the adopted children of God on a journey to find our way home to Him.**

As Jesus pointed out today: we must travel lightly, simplify our lifestyle. We also must keep our attitude focused on our final goal.

There's an ancient story about a monastery where all the monks were old, tired and waiting to die. They'd lost their fire for the Lord and had long since ceased to really care about their fellow brothers. Although they shared the same living space, prayed together, ate together, and worked together, each monk lived in his own world with heart and mind turned inward.

No one came to the monastery. There were no visitors, and no new brothers. The buildings were sadly in need of repair, but the monks didn't care. They felt it wasn't long until there'd be no monastery at all. Everything would return to dust.

Then one day, a holy man visited them. He was a monk himself. For a time he lived with the old brothers, prayed with them talked with them, worked, ate, and slept with them. He was wise and loving. The brothers turned their hearts and minds outward and listened to him.

When the time came for him to leave, this holy man stood before the brothers who were bidding him farewell and wished them God's peace. Some of the monks shook their heads sadly; there's nothing here for us now that you're going, they thought. But the visitor's last words to them were:

“Christ dwells in your midst.”

Then he walked away.

Well, the brothers were quite astonished. They looked at one another with surprise. Which one of them could be the Christ? Surely not Brother William, who never arrived at the chapel on time and never did his work either, for that matter; surely not Brother Mark, who annoyingly slurped his soup; surely not the Abbot, who was always gruff with everyone. Christ wouldn't be late for chapel, or neglect his work, or slurp his soup, or be gruff!

Yet their visitor was a holy and reliable man who had spoken the truth to them the whole time he was in their company.

*This too must be true. **One among them must be Christ!***

So each of the monks began to treat the other as if he were Christ, for they didn't know who it was. They looked for ways to serve one another and were kind to one another and shared with one another. Each did his work as a gift to the Christ who was among them.

*Each honored his fellow monk by listening with full attention and respect. **They began to overlook little things that had annoyed them about one another and began instead to see the good that was in every person.***

*Life began to flow back into the dying community. A vitality and joy was reborn that had been lost for many years. The people of the town nearby learned that something had changed at the monastery. In curiosity they came, **and in love they were received.***

Each was graciously welcomed and made to feel at home. Every effort was taken to care for their needs, and each monk accepted visitors as they were. Men, women, and children came to be refreshed and renewed. The brotherhood grew as men came, even from far away, to join the community.

All the visitors and the new brothers were treated as if they were Christ, for the wise monk had said, "One among you is Christ."

My brothers and sisters,

"One among you is Christ".

Will you look for ways to serve the Christ among us?

Will you love each other?

Will you overlook each other's flaws and see only the gifts?

Will you listen with full attention and respect?

Will you discover that Christ lives in each one of us?

God is love.

We are called to allow that love to flow from Him

through us to our fellow man,

with no reservations.

As we continue on our spiritual journey to our heavenly father, remember the lesson of the monks.

Strive to see Christ in our midst!