

**FROM FR. CHRIS ALIMAJI'S DESK**

***Reflections on the Mission and Sending of the Disciples***

On this Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, July 11, 2021, we read from Amos 7:12-15; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:7-13; and our Song of Praise is Psalm 85. On January 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> at the beginning of the Ordinary Time, we treated the Call to Discipleship (Parts 1 and 2). Today we are reflecting of the Mission and Sending of the Disciples, the Apostles of the Lord, the Prophets of God he called to join him in his mission. In every generation God calls and sends out workers, laborers, co-workers, into the Lord's Vineyard, the House of Israel. It is our duty to pray the Lord of the Harvest to send out more laborers. For he said: "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest." (Lk 10:2; Mt 9:37-38). We honor that command when we pray for vocations, either that we ourselves be sent to that mission or when we pray for others to take up that task. How is the Lord Jesus sending you forth to participate in his mission?

In our First Reading today, the Prophet Amos was called by God from dressing sycamores trees in the Southern Kingdom to go prophesy in the Northern Kingdom of Israel where the Prophet Amaziah saw himself as the royal prophet. From Amaziah grew an unfriendly and jealous competition that he had to reject Amos, and expelled fellow God's messenger, a Southerner. Amos contested his vocation but insisted that he had a genuine call by God who sent him. Understand what happened between the two prophets. Amaziah despised Amos like he was not fit to prophesy in Bethel, the king's sanctuary and a royal temple. Sometimes, those in high positions become complacent and unable to hit the nail on its head. One outside the circle may depict what is truly needed for the mission to be truly carried out. Amaziah was threatened by the presence of Amos, who turned out to be a better preacher. In Amos's defense, we read from the book of Hebrews: "No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God, just as Aaron was." (Heb. 5:4). Those prophets were fighting over territories.

**The words of the Lord in the Gospel today are very appropriate in Amos's situation:** "Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them." (Mk. 6:11). Jesus is calling in more workers, more disciples to join him in the task ahead. Being human, we cannot do it alone. Here is the necessity for more vocations at all levels: priests, nuns, deacons, the lay faithful in ministries, every Church Organizations; to all places, parishes, tribes, races, and countries. Young people need to pray and discern their vocations properly. God may be calling you. As a believer, do not undertake any lifestyle before you discover where God is calling you. Rather, pray constantly for clarity in your vocation. Regarding cares and worries, fear not, you will not lack anything necessary for your mission and sustenance. Hence, he instructed them "to take nothing for the

journey but a walking stick..." (Mk. 6:8). Matthew and Luke rendered the event in similar accounts, (cf. Mt. 10:1-15; Lk. 9:1-6). Anyone who wishes to answer the call but keeps focusing on possessions and welfare would become a failure along the line, come what may. The apostles trusted in the Lord, and successes followed them. They drove out demons and anointed the sick with oil and cured them. The Sacrament of Anointing of the sick with holy oil was there at the time of the apostles, and now is continued by the Catholic Church. We learn from the apostle James regarding sick calls, that the priests anoint them and hear their confessions in faith, (cf. Jas. 5:13-16). Understand why we have Chrism Mass where the bishop blesses the Holy Oils. This too is biblical. Isn't it?

**Finally, St. Paul leads us into the praise of God for blessing "us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens," (Eph. 1:3ff). Our destiny is the praise of God. Try to know God's plan of salvation in Christ. The Holy Spirit is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession. This is too rich and too much to be explained in words. Child of God, try to contemplate it yourself!**