

Homily of Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B, 2021

Amos 7:12-15; Psalm 85:9-14; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:7-13

In the first reading, Prophet Amos replied to Amaziah, priest of Bethel, "I am not a prophet, nor do I belong to a company of prophets. I am a herdsman and a dresser of sycamores, but the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel'" (Amos 7:14-15).

St. Paul, the author of the second reading, in Acts 22:3-4 describes whom he was before the Lord called him: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city. At the feet of Gamaliel, I was educated strictly in our ancestral law and was zealous for God, just as all of you are today. I persecuted this Way to death, binding both men and women and delivering them to prison."

Today's gospel presents us the apostles whom Jesus called and sent them "out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits." Who were they before Jesus called them? Simon Peter, James and John sons of Zebedee, and Bartholomew were fishermen; Philip was a disciple of John the Baptist; Matthew was a tax collector; Simon the Canaanite (the Zealot) was a non-Jew; the background of Thaddaeus, James the Less, and Judas Iscariot was inconspicuous. These men can be referred to as 'nobodies.'

Prophet Amos, St. Paul, and the apostles, none was ready-made at the time of his call. It was a complete switch and change for each person. Some people are called as instruments of the Good News in priestly and religious life, and in ministries in the Church. Some people are, also, called to be benefactors and benefactresses of the Church's missions, parishes, ministries, seminaries, institutions, and programs.

Our world is infested by unclean spirits and diseases. God wants to call men and women whom he will give the authority to drive out demons (in whatever form and shape they are infesting our world) and to cure the sick (in whatever shape and form they are afflicted).

God wants to call generous men and women who will be selfless and self-giving to the call. God wants to call obedient men and women who will be ready and willing to follow the instructions we read in today's gospel: "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 from there. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them'" (Mark 6:8-11).

God wants to call men and women who will be able to give up their own plans, embrace God's plan, and detach themselves from their comfort zones. God wants to call men and women who will be able to withstand oppositions and persecutions as Amos did against Amaziah the priest of Bethel, and as St. Paul and the apostles who refused to be silenced.

No one is exempt from God's call. Everyone's profession or endeavor is his or her call to prophesy, to drive out demons, and to cure the sick. God, also, gives each person the authority he gave to Amos, St. Paul and the apostles. St. Paul says in the second reading, "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him ..." (Ephesians 1:3-4). This means that everyone is blessed with the spiritual blessing, through his or her vocation or profession, or endeavor to be an instrument of prophesy, of evangelization, of deliverance, and of healing.

Let us pray and cast out spirits of discouragement with these words of the Scripture: "Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it. 'See,' he said, 'now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' 'Here I am,' I said; 'send me!'" (Isaiah 6:7-8). Amen.

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