

## **Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time B2018**

All the readings of this Sunday talk about the spirit of the mission and its demands. They show forth in what spirit the mission has to be fulfilled. They invite us to the respect of the spirit of the mission and to the acceptance of its demands.

The first reading recalls the conflict between the prophet Amos and the priest Amaziah. It shows the content of that conflict as referring to two different visions that each has about the mission. Finally, the text talks about Amos' affirmation of his credence as originating from God.

What is behind this text is the idea that those called to ministering the people of God are different from one another. There is also the idea that as they are different in nature, they are too in their vision. The last idea is related to the truth that in spite of all that, however, they are at service of the same God.

This text allows us to understand the point of today's Gospel as Jesus sends the Twelve Apostles in mission. First of all, the gospel starts with Jesus commissioning the apostles in pairs. Then, it gives his instructions on how to conduct themselves in the mission. After that, the Gospel gives the content of the mission and its result.

What do we learn from today's readings? Last week I talked about the mission of God's servant and its difficulties. Today I want to talk about the spirit of the mission and its demands. When I am talking about the spirit of the mission, I mean the way the mission has to be carried out so that it corresponds to Jesus' vision. And when I am talking about the demands, I mean the requirements that have to be fulfilled so that the spirit of the mission might be achieved.

Let me start with a simple question? What is the mission that Jesus has received from the Father? The mission is that every human being may know God, believe in him and comes to eternal salvation. It is that mission which is the goal of the proclamation of the Gospel.

The author of that mission is Jesus. The apostles were the first to be associated with that mission. That was the reason why Jesus chose them to be his companions and continuators of what he had started. You and I participate in that mission of Jesus as priests, catechists, teachers of religious education or RCIA or RCIAT, Eucharistic ministers, Ushers, etc.

When Jesus sends the apostles, as we heard in today's Gospel, he invests them of his authority so that they may have ascendancy over unclean spirits. In modern terms, we would say that he gave them authority over any negative forces that could prevent people to come to eternal salvation.

If we could again use our time terminology, we would say that Jesus invested them with his power so that they make a difference in the lives of those they meet. In other words, because they are bearers of Jesus to others, they have to make a difference in the life of people they touch.

That mission is the task given to you and me today. Anybody meeting us should say, "because of that man or that woman, my life has changed as he brought Jesus to me. While I was worn down with problems, he lifted me up with his words". As you can see that is a real challenge for you and me. Not only because we have to become the

magnets that attract people to Jesus, but also the healers of our brothers and sisters in the name of Jesus.

In order to correctly fulfill that task, the apostles have to work together, counting on one another, completing each other with their gifts, because any isolation diminishes the efficiency of the work of the Lord.

That is why Jesus sends them two by two. That has not changed. It remains true today as it was in the past. It is only when we come together as one people that we can produce a durable work. I believe that the founding fathers were right to say: “E pluribus, Unum”.

One of the consequences of such a vision is the importance of community. We should never practice our individual faith at the margin of the universal Church. We are bound together as individuals and as a community. That is why it is a shame to hear some people saying that they are Catholic, but they do not go to Church, or that they worship God in their home. In the same way, evangelization cannot be done on the basis of everyone relying on himself alone and on his personal inspiration. Evangelization is a work of the Church as a community of believers and not of one individual imposing his ideas on the group.

The apostles have to be detached from material things, because material things create a lure, and the lure, in turn, creates a distraction that prevents to fulfill the mission accordingly. That is the reason why Jesus instructed the apostles to take nothing for the journey, not even food, sack, money, second shirt or pants. In other words, they have to depend on God alone and claim his providence for their survival. Again, that has not changed. It is true today as it was in the past.

The apostles have to live out of the generosity of their brothers and sisters to whom they bring the word of God. That is the reason why Jesus recommended them to stay in the same house until they leave. In some versions of the same message like in the Gospel of Luke (10: 5-9), it says: “eating and drinking what is offered you, because a laborer deserves his payment”.

The apostles have to preach repentance. Repentance means the conversion of heart, that is, the turning away from situations of sins and the turning toward God. That is also true today as it was in the past. Why? Because without conversion of heart, there is no way of pleasing God and, therefore, no way of having eternal salvation.

The apostles have to anoint the sick with oil and cure them. In other words, they have to be preoccupied not only for the spiritual wellbeing of their brothers and sisters to whom they bring the word of God, but also for their physical welfare.

As we are reminded of these truths, let us ask the Lord to help us keep firm this vision in our mission for the glory of his name and the salvation of our brothers and sisters. God bless you all!

**Amos 7: 12-15; Ephesians 2: 3- 10; Mark 6: 7–13**



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