

## 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B

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### Sources:

SCB: ([St Charles](#))

SH: ([David Scott & Scott Hahn](#))

JPII: ([JPII](#) – 09/25/02)

RC: ([Cantalamessa](#))

**1st Reading - Amos 7:12-15** - Amaziah, priest of Bethel, said to Amos, "Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of Judah! There earn your bread by prophesying, but never again prophesy in Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary and a royal temple." Amos answered Amaziah, "I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to a company of prophets; I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. The LORD took me from following the flock, and said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

### SCB:

- Amos is the oldest of the books of prophetic literature, dating around the time 760 to 750 B.C. He appears to have been a layman with no special training for the religious ministry. Amos wrote during the reign of Jeroboam II of the Northern Kingdom (Israel). It was a time of peace and prosperity but also a period of social and religious corruption.
- Of all the books of prophecy, Amos is the least hopeful.
- He reminds the people that God has acknowledged Israel as His covenant people but they abused the privilege.
- Since they have ignored the covenant, the curses associated with it shall befall them. Although Amos directs his words primarily at the leadership (the king in 7:10-11, the priests in 7:16-17, and the upper classes in 4:1-3 & 6:1) the coming judgment will affect the entire people because the nation of Israel has a common destiny.
- The name means "Yahweh is mighty."
- Bethel means "house of El (God)" It is located about 14 miles north of Jerusalem. It was a place of assembly where Jeroboam I had set up a golden calf (he set up another at Dan) and installed priests who were not Levites (1 Kings 12:28-31). Amaziah was not a priest of Yahweh.
- Go home - you are a foreigner here. Amos is interfering in Israel's religious and political affairs.

- Amos is a prophet not by his choice or inheritance or training, but because of the personal intervention of God.

**Psalm 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14** - I will hear what God proclaims; the LORD --for he proclaims peace. Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him, glory dwelling in our land.

Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven.

The LORD himself will give his benefits; our land shall yield its increase. Justice shall walk before him, and prepare the way of his steps.

JPII:

- However, to the "return" of God who forgives must correspond the "return", that is, the "conversion", of the one who repents. In fact, the Psalm says that peace and salvation are offered "to those who turn to him in their hearts" (v. 9). Those who set out with determination on the path of holiness receive the gifts of joy, freedom and peace.
- It is well known that biblical terms for sin often refer to a mistaken direction, a missed goal, a deviation from the straight path. Conversion is, precisely, a "return" to the straight road that leads to the house of the Father who waits to embrace us, pardon us and make us happy (cf. Luke 15:11-32).
- Thus we come to the second part of the Psalm (cf. Ps 85:10-14), so dear to Christian tradition. It describes a new world in which God's love and his faithfulness embrace each other as if they were persons. Similarly, justice and peace meet and kiss each other. Truth sprouts up as if in a new springtime and justice, which for the Bible also means salvation and holiness, appears from heaven to begin its journey in the midst of humanity.
- All the virtues, at first expelled from the earth by sin, now re-enter history and meet, drawing the map of a world of peace. Mercy, truth, justice and peace become the four cardinal points of this geography of the spirit.

**2nd Reading - Ephesians 1:3-14** - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in

Christ, in heaven and on earth. In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

SCB:

- In the time of Paul Ephesus was the leading city in Asia Minor. It contained the temple of the Roman goddess Diana, the goddess of fertility, which was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The city's jewelers did a very profitable business through the manufacture of statuettes of the goddess – which explains why the people rioted, at the instigation of Demetrius the silversmith (Acts 19:24ff) against Paul and his companions, who naturally, preached against superstition and the worship of idols.
- The words “who are at Ephesus” (Ephesians 1:1) do not appear in the earliest Greek manuscripts leading some scholars to believe this may have been a circular letter to all the churches in the region. It has a strong parallel, in both form and content to Colossians and may have been written to develop the teaching contained in Colossians.
- The blessing begins with a formula known from the Old Testament and commonly used in Jewish and early Christian prayers (Tobit 13:1, 1 Peter 1:3). The formula recognizes God's greatness and rejoices of the divine gifts which have been received.
- References to God the Father, Jesus the Christ, and spiritual blessings have been seen as a reference to the Holy Trinity because it is the Holy Spirit who distributes the gifts of God.
- In the Old Testament, the victim offered to God had to be unblemished, blameless (Genesis 17:1).
- He chose us that we might become saintly and unblemished, that is, that we who were not formerly saintly and unblemished should subsequently be so.”
- He Himself has made us saints, but we are called to remain saints. A saint is one who lives in faith, is unblemished and leads a blameless life.”
- A recurrent theme in Ephesians: that man, understanding God's plan, should praise Him and give thanks.
- “So that our love for Him may become more fervent, He desires nothing from us except our salvation. He does not need our service or anything else but does everything for this end.
- Redemption implies setting free. Since the golden calf mankind was not free, could not approach God directly, could not approach without a sacrificial animal. Jesus' death on the cross provided the once for all sacrifice which consecrated the altar and all mankind (Galatians 4:5).

- “Forgiveness of sins follows redemption, for there would be no forgiveness of sin for anyone before redemption occurs. First then we need to be redeemed, to be no longer subject to our captor and oppressor, so that having been freed and taken out of his hands we may be able to receive the benefit of remission of sins.
- Jesus’ death on the cross provided the final bloody sacrifice and made it possible for all to approach and receive forgiveness for sins. Mankind was redeemed from the slavery of sin, from the power of Satan, from death. Old Testament (covenant) sacrifice was messy, public, expensive, and ineffective. Now, mankind has been given back their dignity.
- In the old covenant, the male child was sealed to God through circumcision. In the new covenant we are all sealed through baptism (Colossians 2:11-12).
- This grace is already being given, through which miracles were worked: the dead were raised, lepers cleansed and demons driven out. All of these and similar things have the status of a pledge, so it will become obvious that the faithful will enjoy in the future a much greater grace.”

### **Gospel - Mark 6:7-13**

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to 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. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them." So they went off and preached repentance. The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

SCB:

- Two witnesses are required in any life and death situation (Deuteronomy 19:6). Preaching the gospel of Jesus the Christ is preaching about spiritual life and death.
- Jesus requires them to be free of any form of attachment if they are to preach the Gospel.
- The parallel gospels (Matthew 10:10 and Luke 9:3) prohibit the disciples from taking a staff.
- Traveling missionaries depended on local hospitality. This command prevents social climbing and searching for better quarters.
- The washing of the traveler’s feet upon arrival was a sign of welcome. When local hospitality is not offered, leave quietly.
- Jesus preached repentance (like John the Baptist) even before He selected the 12 (Mark 1:14-15). They are now to do the same – remember there has been no resurrection yet, we are still early in Jesus’ public life.

- Mark is the only evangelist who speaks of anointing with oil. Oil was often used for treating wounds (Isaiah 1:6, Luke 10:34). The Apostles also use it for the miraculous cure of physical illnesses by virtue of the power (authority) given them by Jesus. In this verse there is a “hint” of the sacrament of the sick – where anointing cures wounds of the soul and, if appropriate in God’s plan, bodily diseases as well.

SH:

- His instructions to the Twelve echo those of God to the twelve tribes of Israel on the eve of their exodus from Egypt. The Israelites likewise were sent out with no bread and only one set of clothes, wearing sandals and carrying a staff (see Exodus 12:11; Deuteronomy 8:2-4). Like the Israelites, the apostles are to rely solely on the providence of God and His grace.
- Perhaps, also, Mark wants us to see the apostles’ mission, the mission of the Church, as that of leading a new exodus - delivering peoples from their exile from God and bringing them to the promised land, the kingdom of heaven.
- Like Amos, they are simply men (see Acts 14:15) summoned from their ordinary jobs and sent by God to be shepherds of their brothers and sisters.
- Again this week, we hear the theme of rejection: Amos experiences it, and Jesus warns the apostles that some will not welcome or listen to them.
- With authority and power given to it by Jesus, the Church proclaims God’s peace and salvation to those who believe in Him, as we sing in today’s Psalm.

RC:

- For the moment it is a limited mission to the neighboring peoples, that is, to Jewish fellow countrymen. After Easter, this mission will be extended to the whole world, also to pagans: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" [Mark 16:15].
- He thought his mission should continue, be permanent, so that each person, in all times and places of history, would have the possibility to hear the Good News of God's love and be saved.
- That is why he chose collaborators and began to send them ahead to preach the Kingdom and cure the sick. He did with his disciples what a good rector does today with his seminarians, who, on the weekends, sends his young men to parishes so that they will begin to have pastoral experience, or sends them to charitable institutions to help those who look after the poor.
- After this sending of the apostles, the Gospel of Luke reads, Jesus "appointed seventy-two others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come" (Luke 10:1). These seventy-two disciples were probably all those he had gathered up to that moment, or at least all those who followed him with a certain continuity. Jesus, therefore, sent all his disciples, also laymen.

- The laity of ecclesial movements are the successors of these seventy-two disciples.
- The Gospel uses only one word to say what the apostles should preach to the people ("that they repent,") whereas it describes at length how they must preach. In this regard, there is an important teaching in the fact that Jesus sent them two by two. Going two by two was customary in those times, but with Jesus it assumes a new meaning, no longer only practical. Jesus sent them two by two -- explained Saint Gregory the Great -- to inculcate charity, because with less than two persons there can be no charity.
- We must be careful not to misinterpret Jesus' phrase about shaking the dust off their feet when they were not received. In Christ's intention, this was meant to be a testimony "for" them, not against them. It should serve to make them understand that the missionaries had not gone for selfish reasons, to take money or other things from them; more than that, they did not even want to take away their dust. They had gone for their salvation and, rejecting them, deprived themselves of the greatest good of the world.