

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD  
IN THE  
CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY  
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
July 14, 2024**

**SCRIPTURES:**

<b>Amos 7:12-15</b>	The prophet is called by God, not by Israel’s rulers.
<b>Ephesians 1:3-14</b>	God chose us to share with Christ in redemption.
<b>Mark 6:7-13</b>	Jesus sends the Twelve to share in his ministry.

**SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:**

**Amos:**

The prophet is from the southern Kingdom of Judah; his ministry is to the northern Kingdom of Israel between 760-750 B.C.E. That country has become rich on the backs of the poor. Amos presents his message in five visions, of which this is the third. The people have not listened to the two first messages. They will not hear this one either. Amos defends his mission: he is no employee of the king; he was sent by God. A “dresser of sycamore trees” was a farmer who punctured the fruit of the tree so that the poor would have something to eat. He represents God who is concerned for the poor, whereas the nation is not, blinded as it is by its shallow prosperity.

**Ephesians:**

This letter is probably meant as a baptismal homily addressed to all the churches. Chapter One deals with the exalted privileges of the baptized who live now by the life of Christ. Framed as a hymn of praise to the Holy Trinity, the passage proclaims that believers are called to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ.

**Mark:**

The author brackets the “sending of the Twelve” with the death of John the Baptist. By this means, Mark shows that the real meaning of the mission is to witness even unto death. The Twelve too must carry out their mission of bearing witness to Christ by a willingness to lay down their lives. It was clear to those who first heard the proclamation of this Gospel that Mark meant to identify the ultimate fate of the disciples with what happened to John the Baptist. To lay down a life in witness to the truth of Jesus Christ. That is what awaits the followers of Jesus.

It is clear that the disciples are to share in the same mission as Christ himself. “He drove out many demons” Mk 1:34. To root out evil from one’s environment is the task assigned to all who would be disciples. It is not enough to sit at the Master’s feet and to listen with awe to his words. They and we are to go out and do what he did. We are to banish evil and sin from our lives and from the world in which we live.

The few things they are to bring on an apostolic journey indicate that the mission itself has priority over possessions and assets. “Things” are not as important as the “good news” to be

proclaimed. The less we have with us, the more room there is for the message. St. Francis of Assisi took these words literally. He and his first brothers went barefooted, with a rope around the waist instead of a leather belt; they worked for the food needed for one day and gave their surplus to those who had less than they. No wonder people paid attention to the message they proclaimed!

A welcoming heart and deeds of hospitality characterize the Christian community. Missionaries must be received with respect and honor. They must be given provisions and love. Pious Jews shook the Gentile dust from their feet as they returned to Jewish territory. Inhospitable people, then, will be treated like foreigners. It is meant as a warning of what God will do to those who reject the good news of Jesus Christ.

Again, there is a parallel between the ministry of Jesus and that of the disciples. What can we expect? To be treated differently from the Master? Why should we have a better life than that which Jesus lived? What Jesus did, we must do; the way he was treated is the way we will be treated. We carry his image with us on our missionary journey through life.

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Many in the Church hesitate to set out as messengers of the Good News because we lack many things: lack of education, lack of training, no access to a TV network, no radio time, no money! Comment on what the Twelve had as they set out on their journey. What do we really need beside the Gospel deeply engraved in our hearts? What training do we really need for the work of evangelization?

2. What are the “demons” that we are sent to cast out today in our society? What are the illnesses of the soul and spirit that need to be healed in our times? Anger and hatred? Bigotry and pride? Lust and greed? Laziness and fear? Do you have any experience of some of these “demons”?

3. What does the Church need to hold on to as it proceeds on its mission? What does the Church need to get rid of before it can effectively pursue its mission today? What does your parish need to acquire before it can set out on its mission? What does your parish need to get rid of before it can effectively evangelize?

## **PRAYER**

**Father,  
let the light of your truth  
guide us to your kingdom  
through a world filled with lights  
contrary to your own.  
Christian is the name and the Gospel we glory in.  
May your love make us  
what you have called us to be.**

Roman Sacramentary: 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday

## **CATHOLIC DOCTRINE**

The mission of the Church derives from the mission of Christ. As Christ came to teach the good news of the kingdom of God, to offer praise and thanksgiving to the Father, and to lead all creation to the heavenly realm, so the Church must teach, worship, and lead to God.

A diocese or a parish that does not engage in all those activities in the name of Jesus Christ is not an authentic Christian community.

The Church does not exist for its own sake. It has been sent to do the works of Jesus Christ. Unless it does so, it risks being rejected by God.

Preaching and religious education need to be guided by the values and content described in the mission of Jesus and in the mission of the disciples. Too many material possessions will often distract both the parish and its members from the starkness of the message: the Crucified Lord. To preach or teach a mere humanistic message of togetherness and good feelings avoids the truth of the Gospel message.

Celebrating sacraments is not enough if the Church is truly to live out the mission of Jesus: to worship the Father in holiness and truth. The Church must pray for forgiveness of its sins, for a cleansing of its heart. We must consecrate ourselves body and soul to the all holy God. Prayer and contemplation need to hold a central place in the life of the community and of its individual members.

Serving the poor, taking care of the sick, promoting peace, defending the oppressed, opposing crime and corruption, healing the brokenhearted, rescuing the lost, soothing pain, caring for the dying, transforming oppressive and alienating conditions in society, ending wars, creating beauty and goodness all around in God's creation: all this the Church must do to imitate Christ.

### **The Catechism: # 737, 778**

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