

The readings of today are all about proclamation of God's word. He chose the 12 disciples and sends them two by two to every town and village to proclaim the Word. He gives strict guidelines in this mission.

Discipleship is communitarian. We are disciples together. The church of Christ is a community of believers *brought together by the word and sacraments, especially the Eucharist.* In the Catholic Church we are invited to respond to the call, to be sent out on mission. Not only priests and religious but all baptized people too. Being sent on mission for Christians is always the *initiative of God.* It is he who calls and empowers us, through the Holy Spirit, to be effective witnesses to him. It doesn't depend on us, the mission is God's, but he uses us.

In the first reading today Amos who is a poor, unlettered, unsophisticated shepherd receives the call from God to leave the southern kingdom where he worked and go to the northern kingdom to denounce the social injustices and other offences committed by the people against God's covenant. He is told to go back to his birthplace by the high priest Amaziah. Amos' reply is quite simple. He is called and sent by Yahweh. That is his only justification. We don't need a master's in theology to spread the good news. As disciples, we are asked to do in our world what Jesus did in His: *build up a community of faith and worship, reach-out to those in need, and share the good news of God's love with those we encounter.*

It is important to share with others our personal experience of knowing Jesus. The message we are to bring as evangelizers is our *own personal lives.* We are sharing not just words, or ideas, or doctrines but an experience, our experience of God and of Jesus. The evangelizer invites people – be they Christians or the non-baptized – to share this wonderful experience. Every one of us is here today because someone, introduced us to know and love Jesus. I am expected to do the same for others. *The witness value of Christianity is central. A Christian is in the business of attracting, not promoting.*

The second guideline is: Depend on Divine Providence. The missionaries of the Word are sent out in poverty. They are to rely on God by being told to travel light, to take only the minimum for their essential needs. The mission must be carried out in simplicity and poverty. If we are to help people recover their freedom, we too must be a free people. So, Jesus tells his apostles when they go out to evangelize, they should rely not on earthly possessions but divine providence. If it is God's work, God will provide, and He has provided for the last 2000 years through you.

Mission is aimed at the total person; in the gospel Jesus sends out his disciples not only with the call to repent, to convert people but to heal them from sickness and all powers of evil. The human person is to be saved in the concrete realities of his/her existence. Those of us who are Christians and therefore disciples of Jesus are given the same mandate as the Twelve of

today's gospel. How do we heal?

- *We can cure others by our love, encouragement, affirmation, forgiveness, acceptance of their failures etc.*
- *We can cast out devils of fear, anxiety, worry, guilt by the way we are there for them when they need us.*
- **Welcome and hospitality have great healing powers.** Jesus brought together people of diverse interests, backgrounds, and traditions: choosing both Peter the fisherman and Matthew the tax collector as apostles; healing Gentiles as well as Jews; teaching the humble and unschooled as well as educated scribes and Pharisees. This aspect of discipleship is crucial today in a society where so many people live lonely, isolated lives, far from extended family and without the support of companions and friends, where people may even live side-by-side for years without knowing one another's names.

As disciples of Jesus, then, we must seek to foster among ourselves and with others a sense of community. We must strive to break down barriers of race, age, gender, ethnicity, and religious differences, and place a priority on dialogue, support, and community-building. We may find it hard to accept this and it will seem impossible if we think the power comes from us. But if we are more conscious of being chosen and sent by God as was Amos and the Twelve, we can claim the power of God to fulfill the calling he gives us.

Prophets not welcome. The evangelizer needs to realize that he/she is not always welcome. In the First Reading today, the priest Amaziah tells Amos to bring his prophesying back to his own country. They don't want to listen to him in Bethel. Similarly, we too will face opposition from our own family members, co-workers, neighbors etc. As long as we carry out this task with integrity we will have done our job, we will have fulfilled our mission. If in due time our children ultimately choose to reject the message of Jesus then we will not be to blame. We will have done our job and handed on Jesus' message to them, we will have trained them in prayer, and we will have taught them the importance of living good morals. What they do with this information is entirely up to them.

At the end of the Mass, we are sent out to share with others the gifts we have received from the Lord. Here the Lord forgives our sins, speaks his word to us, and nourishes us with the food of the Eucharist.

God Bless You.