

# 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

Fr. Samuel Springuel

11 July, 2021

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading** Amos 7:12–15

**Responsorial Psalm** Psalm 85:9–10,11–12,13–14

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading** Ephesians 1:3–14

**Gospel** Mark 6:7–13

When you think of Jesus’s ministry, what do you think of? Do you think of the preaching? The visits to synagogues, the sermon on the mountain, the sermon on the plain, the preaching by the shores of the Sea of Galilee? The parables, the Beatitudes, the exhortations and condemnations? Or do you think of his powerful deeds? The changing of water into wine, the feeding of a multitude not once but twice? The calming of the storm, the walking on water? The healing of the sick, the driving out of demons, even the raising of the dead? Or do you think of the ultimate act of his ministry: the Passion, Death, and Resurrection by which we have been saved?

Whichever of these that you think of, and all of them have been featured prominently in artistic representations of Jesus’s ministry, Jesus is something of a lonely figure in them. He may be surrounded by people, but these people are not there as equal participants. They are those who request, receive, and/or witness these events. Jesus is the primary, and sometimes only, active participant working to bring about the resolution of the situation. Today’s Gospel, however, reminds us of a different aspect of Jesus’s ministry: the recruitment and training of people to extend and carry on the same mission. This process started on the shores of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus called to Peter, Andrew, James, and John and told them to “Follow me.” It continued when the disciples were given explanations of the parables and other teachings, a sort of advanced studies so that their understanding might be deeper, allowing them to eventually take on the mantle of teacher themselves. They also assisted at various miracles, handing out the multiplied loaves and fishes, for example. And here today, we hear of the Apostles being sent forth on a training mission: their first chance to get out from under the Master’s wing and try working on their own. All this gives witness to the fact that Jesus was not simply a lone actor. From the very beginning he sought out and trained people to carry on the mission with which he himself was charged, even if there were some aspects which he alone could accomplish.

This is important for us to remember because this process continues today. Jesus continues to call people to come to know him, to learn about his mission, and then go forth themselves to carry it on to others. For those of us seated up here in the choir, this is probably an obvious statement. As monks, and in some cases priests, we have answered the call of Jesus in a very explicit and public manner. Like Amos, we have been called out of our ordinary lives to dedicate ourselves in a special way to Jesus's mission. Like Amos, we have been called away from our homes to dedicate ourselves to Jesus's mission in this place. The manner of our lives — the way we dress, where we live, the schedule of our day — these things give witness to our radical and visible commitment to Jesus's mission. Our vocations have prophetic value and are intended to show the world a glimpse of the Kingdom. We do not always live up to that, but this is our calling.

However, it should not be thought that only those who are explicitly following an ordained or consecrated way of life are called to carry on Jesus's mission. All of you seated in the nave, all of you watching on the Internet, all people throughout the world are called to a role in Jesus's mission too. St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians might have been written to you. It tells you that you are "chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One." You, too, have a role to play in sharing Jesus's message. Your role is not the same as our role: you remain in the world, pursuing careers, raising families, and doing the other seemingly mundane tasks of daily life. But, if anything, this makes your role even more important. For while the ordained priest or consecrated religious is set apart from the world to provide a prophetic witness, that separation limits our ability to change the world. You, on the other hand, by being in the world, have the power to change it, to bring it more closely into alignment with the Kingdom of God. This may be done in small ways, it may be done in large ways, depending on your particular set of gifts and circumstances, but regardless of the "size" of your contribution, it is no less essential. Even something as small as the gift of a cup of water is noticed and rewarded in heaven.

The variety of life circumstances and personal gifts represented just here in the nave is far too broad for me to give you any concrete advice for fulfilling your part in Jesus's mission. I can only exhort you to remember that your participation in the mission of Christ is both privilege and responsibility. It is a privilege, a gift, given to you by Jesus Christ. It is not something you earned, it is not something anyone earns. Christ, however, in his beneficent wisdom has seen fit to grant each and everyone of us a chance to participate in our own salvation, and the salvation of others and be not simply recipients, but givers too. It is a responsibility, an obligation, laid upon you and about which you will be judged on the Last Day. Christ will separate the sheep who have done their part, from the goats who have not, even if they were not aware of what they were doing, and reward or punish them accordingly. I enjoin you, be aware of what you are doing; reflect on you actions as part of Christ's mission, "so that [*you*, and everything that you do,] might exist for the praise of His glory."