

Be a trusting missionary

15th Sunday of the Year (July 13):
(R3) Mark 6:7-13; (R1) Amos 7:12-15;
(R2) Ephesians 1:3-14.

In the first reading Amos, against his personal wish, has been commissioned as a prophet by God. He has a prophetic message that is not at all appealing to Amaziah, the priest in the king's court.

This reading complements the Gospel account in which Jesus sends the disciples out two by two, unencumbered with material possessions and prepared to move on when their message is rejected. The presumption here is that rejection will be part of the disciples' experience. Jesus knows that the message he brings is not comfortable and very often challenges those who hear it to change their ways. Not everyone can accept such a challenge.

Amos points out that the choice to become a prophet was not his own. "This was not my idea," he says, "and I certainly never considered myself a member of the elite. So don't blame me for a message you can't accept. I've got a job to do, whether you approve or not."

Amos' straightforward honesty gives his prophetic role great credibility. There is a disinterestedness about the "reluctant prophet" which is reassuring — less chance that his motives are sullied by interest in personal gain.

The second reading is from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. This is the first of seven consecutive weeks during which we read from Paul's letter.

The Pauline passage this Sunday is a kind of summary of salvation history. Beginning in the eternal mind of God where we were chosen and predestined before time began, we move through the incarnation of Christ and the divine favor bestowed on us in him. The mighty sweep continues through the passion and death, the Resurrection and Ascension — when Christ resumes his place as head of creation. Finally the passage acknowledges the outpouring of the church's mission the world over.

The Gospel reading sets down the conditions under which genuine evangelization will be undertaken. It is absolutely necessary to be unencumbered in the mission field, whether that field be in the farthest reaches of the globe or in one's own neighborhood. A heroic faith is required — a faith that presumes that God's loving providence will sustain the dedicated worker. The virtue of detachment is advised here, for without detachment a preacher cannot center on the Good News.

Missionaries, and that's all of us,



Father Albert Shamon

A word for Sunday

must be realistic — not presuming that their message will be universally welcomed and embraced. Far from it. They must expect a cool reception, even rejection, at certain times and places. And when they encounter it, they must be able to assess honestly the reason for the rejection and then move on in confident hope.

Some people are hardened by the circumstances of life. The Christian answer seems too easy. They shake their fists at the sky when tragedy hits. But God has things well under control. The problem is our lack of patience to wait for his timetable.

The story is told of a Christian author who experienced great tragedy in the life of her family, but was able to use this in ministering to other people in pain. Her husband was severely injured in Vietnam. Her oldest son was killed by a drunken driver, and she and her husband had been alienated from their youngest son for years by his choice to experiment with drugs. She wrote, "God never promised that we would be ahead at half-time. God just promised that we would win the game."

God is not some mad scientist on high, pushing buttons "at will" as we go along. Nor is he a God who invades our free will to obey or disobey him. What is clear is that we are loved, we are purchased, we are stamped as one of his. And finally we have the guarantee that God will complete his redemption. He knows. He loves. He cares. Nothing this truth can dim. He gives his very best to those who leave the choice with him.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, July 14
Exodus 1:8-14, 22
Psalms 124:1-8
Matthew 10:34-11:1

Tuesday, July 15
Exodus 2:1-15A
Psalms 69:3, 14
30-31, 33-34
Matthew 11:20-24

Wednesday, July 16
Exodus 3:1-6, 9-12
Psalms 103:1-4, 6-7
Matthew 11:25-27

Thursday, July 17
Exodus 3:13-20
Psalms 105:1, 5, 8-9, 24-27
Matthew 11:28-30

Friday, July 18
Exodus 11:10-12:14
Psalms 116:12-13, 15-18
Matthew 12:1-8

Saturday, July 19
Exodus 12:37-42
Psalms 136:1
10-15, 23-24
Matthew 12:14-21

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Health Care Issue July 17

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