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15th Ordinary Sunday - 11 July 2021

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11 July 2021

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction

Jesus sends the Twelve on mission and has them follow the practices and traditions of the prophets. Their mission is successful, yet they seem to have lost sight of the fact that it is Jesus who is behind their success.

Collect of the Sunday

The meaning of the opening prayer rests in the petition that those who have made Christian profession may be kept from following errant ways. Their Christian profession is a public reckoning by which they reject their former straying from God's way, acknowledge divine truth, and are now known by the name 'Christian'. This name, however, must not only be professed but necessarily lived out appropriately. What is inimical to it must be shunned, and what is appropriate to it must be carried out. The confidence of the baptized that God will grant their petition stems from their faith that Holy One constantly works to enable those who stray to return to the truth.

The historical and liturgical contexts of the prayer bear this out. Gelasius I (d.496), the probable author, was engaged in a polemic with Christians who publicly defended and participated in the festival of the Lupercalia. He notes with abhorrence that even though God had brought pagan Rome from its errant ways to the true path, those who now bear the name Christian were intent on taking up the pagan celebrations. For Gelasius, Christian profession involves the renunciation of sacrilegious beliefs (the power of the ancestors to bring salvation) and practices. This is lived out both through rejecting festivals and rites that are contrary to baptismal commitment and by doing what is appropriate.

In the liturgical tradition, however, the prayer has been used consistently as a collect in Easter, with its reminder of Easter baptisms present and past. This offers the possibility of a different perspective. The invocation of God's universal salvific will echoes the paschal mystery being celebrated. The image of light recalls the splendour of the resurrection through which the darkness is illuminated by the truth of Christ. It recalls Christ's triumph over all that leads to darkness, sin and perpetual death.

As the prayer stands in our missal, it carries a significant ecumenical dimension. By praying for all who profess the name Christian, the collect links the local community gathered in the eucharist with the whole body of Christian believers. The oration envisions the Christian people as all those who have undertaken baptism, and who profess it with congruent behaviour.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you call us to be your disciples. Lord, have mercy.
You teach us how to accept generosity. Christ, have mercy.
You heal the sick. Lord, have mercy.

First Reading

Amos 7:12-15

The prophet Amos protests to the priests and leaders that his prophecy is not his own, but from God and so he is bound to follow the word of the Lord.

Second Reading

Ephesians 1:3-14 or 1:3-10

In the mystery of God's will we are called to live in the generous favour of God, blessed in all ways, sealed with the Holy Spirit and called to sing the praises and glory of God.

Gospel Reading

Mark 6:7-13

Jesus sends the twelve on mission, empowering them to do the mighty deeds that he has achieved. Their success is due alone to the authority that Jesus gives them

Reflection

We begin our commentary with the first reading. It has a match in the Gospel, but also stands in its own right as a challenging text. In effect, the prophet is being told to take his business elsewhere. He is excluded from the holy place of Bethel, the place of worship – the temple - and of kings – a royal sanctuary. The message is clear: go somewhere else, go to Judah, you are not welcome here. But Amos is built of sterner stuff. He is not a professional prophet but a farmer and shepherd. His business is animals and plants. But God has called him, and this calling is above the institutions that see themselves as guardians of the land. His sayings and prophecies have riled them, and his utterances cannot possibly be from the Lord because they are not sanctioned by the Temple and the King. Two things are immediately apparent. Firstly, God is not limited to institutions, even divine institutions. Secondly, institutions that claim divine warrant must be true to the honour and power they wield. It is a pity the passage from Amos is so short! He preaches the destruction of holy place and royal family, and imminent exile for the people, but offers the reasons God will allow it. The leaders and people have

transgressed the law of God, but the focus is on their injustice and disdain for the poor. Here is an example of the prophet's denunciations:

This is what the LORD says:

“For three sins of Israel,
even for four, I will not relent.
They sell the innocent for silver,
and the needy for a pair of sandals.
They trample on the heads of the poor
as on the dust of the ground
and deny justice to the oppressed.
Father and son use the same girl
and so profane my holy name.
They lie down beside every altar
on garments taken in pledge.
In the house of their god
they drink wine taken as fines. (Amos 2:6-8)

Justice, care of the poor, proper worship and respecting rights are signs of the reign of God, and the prophet unleashes that the temple and king have fallen far short. It is not hard to see the influence of this prophetic thinking and acting in Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti*.¹

The Gospel offers a contrast on the meaning of the reign of God. We need to be careful of the emphasis Mark is placing on the events that he recounts. All that is accomplished through the Twelve is brought about through Jesus. It is Jesus who summons, gives authority, instructs and then admonishes rules about conduct. Everything that follows is premised on the actions and words of Jesus. To reinforce this, they take nothing for the journey: in effect they need nothing because they are fully reliant of Jesus. He provides, since they do his work and his work alone. The use of sandals and staff is a reminder that this is truly a journey. Jesus sets their actions within the culturally accepted codes of the time. They accept the hospitality offered and do not go shopping for better offers: they stay in one place till they leave. Their mission is God's mission and so those who reject it are to be given clear warning of what has been rejected: they shake the dust from their feet.

These missionaries then set off to do what Jesus has done. They preach repentance, they drive out demons and they cure the sick with anointing. However, Mark is clear that though these are the Twelve, their authority and power to act is only from Jesus. There is a parallel here with Amos in that the institution, be it Royalty, Temple or Twelve, is empty unless it is as one with the message and will of God. Further, if the prophet Amos is a true prophet, and Jesus of Nazareth a true and divine prophet, then the will of God for King, Holy Place and Apostles is around

¹ http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

healing, justice, the poor, freeing from demons, the inbreaking of the reign of God. As a church this Gospel is calling us to account as missionary disciples.

Our Pauline hymn from the beginning of the Letter to the Ephesians strikes a different note. This is one of the soaring pieces of the New Testament writings. It sings of the mystery of the will of God towards us, the infinite 'favour' God shows to creation itself and our redemption within it. We are destined in Christ as the adopted children, forgiven, granted the Spirit, and brought to fulfillment at the close of time. This great paean to the blessings in Christ calls us to exist for the praise and glory of God. Here there is a link with Mark, but particularly with the Book of Amos. True worship and authentic praise and glory are interconnected with true actions and authentic care for God's creation and all its people.



He called the twelve
and sent them out.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As we offer our praise to God we present our needs with trust and confidence.

Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Church who are also called to be prophets in this world. May they show us clearly how to reflect the steadfast love of God through their work in the Plenary Council.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of Australia and the world that the crises of the pandemic and climate change will bring them towards actions of justice and peace.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our own community that we will fully embrace Christ in our lives by allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us in all we do.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are burdened by illness and suffering that their hearts may be open to the light of God in their lives.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those ourselves, that we may feel the strength of the Holy Spirit, to guide us in following God's will, especially in times of uncertainty.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those suffering from illness or grief that they will find strength and peace through the care of those around them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

We place all our needs before God, confident that they will be answered through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Baptised in water. M. Saward. 179
Be not afraid. B. Dufford SJ. 449
Bring forth the kingdom. M. Haugen. 478
Church of God. P. Stotter. 480
Forth in the peace of Christ we go. J. Quinn SJ. 495
Here I am, Lord. D. Schutte. 496
I am the bread of life. S. Toolan RSM. 204.
Lord, you give the great commission. J. Rowthorn. 313
Make me a channel of your peace. S. Temple. 490
Out of darkness. C. Walker. 504
Take Christ to the world. P. Inwood. 369
Take the word of God with you as you go. J. Harrison/ C. Walker. 494
The Spirit of God. L. Deiss. 185
The voice of God. P. Icarus. 476

AOV1

All that is hidden. B. Farrell. 127
Be not afraid. B. Dufford SJ. 114
Here I am, Lord. D. Schutte. 90
I am the bread of life. S. Toolan RSM. 49
Out of darkness. C. Walker. 134
Send us as your blessing, Lord. C. Walker. 181

AOV2

Bring forth the kingdom. M. Haugen. 4
Make me a channel of your peace. S. Temple. 126

AOV4Kids

Living in the light. L. Good. 66
This little light of mine. Traditional. 40

CWB

Forth in the peace of Christ we go. James Quinn SJ. 681
Give thanks to God, the Father. James Quinn SJ. 687
Go now, you are sent forth. Leo Watt OFM. 690

CWBII

Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
Lord, you give the great commission. Jeffrey Rowthorn. 308
Forth in the peace of Christ we go. James Quinn SJ. 489
Give thanks to God, the Father. James Quinn SJ. 492
Go now, you are sent forth. Leo R. Watt. 494
Go to the world! Sylvia G. Dunstan. 496
Additional selections by Chris deSilva
Go, make of all disciples. Leon M. Adkins. 493

S&S1

Lord, let us see your kindness. Paul Hillebrand. 71
Here I am, Lord. Dan Schutte. 152

S&S2

Show us, O Lord. Jaime Cortez. 264
Lord, show us your mercy and love. Janèt Sullivan Whitaker. 265

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 84: *Lord, show us your mercy and love, and grant us your salvation.*

Psalm 84: Noel Ansell. CWB 176

Psalm 85 (84): Jenny O'Brien. JOBB pg. 8

Lord, show us your mercy: Paul Mason. PM pg. 60

Lord, let us see your kindness: Marty Haugen. LPB pg. 10

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Show us your kindness and love (FWS based on Ps 85) [Gifts]



Ps 85:12

*Our earth
shall yield
its fruit.*