

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
The Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 14, 2024

Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Mission

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

Today in our first reading from the Book of Amos, we encounter a remarkable figure: Amos, an ordinary shepherd and a “dresser of sycamores.” Despite his humble background, God called Amos to prophesize to the people of Israel. This narrative reminds us that God calls each one of us, regardless of our position or status, to be prophets in the New Israel. As baptized Christians, we are summoned to extraordinary tasks through our faith. The story of Amos, and the mission of the twelve apostles as recounted in today’s Gospel, draw attention to our own calling and purpose as followers of Christ.

Jesus sends out the twelve apostles, instructing them to rely on God for all things. He tells them to take with them nothing of consequence—no bread, no bag, no money. This command to travel light is a powerful metaphor for our own lives. We are called to simplify, to leave behind the excesses and distractions that hinder our mission as Christians. By relying on God and stepping out of our comfort zones, we can become full-time disciples, always ready to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Yet, the apostles were advised to carry a staff and wear sandals, symbolic of their readiness to journey and their dependence on God. Similarly, we are called to lean on our faith as our “staff” and to embrace a life of spiritual mobility. As Christians, we are always on a pilgrimage, spreading the message of Christ through our words and actions. Our purpose is great: to make disciples of all people. This mission requires us to embody Jesus’s teachings in every aspect of our lives, demonstrating our faith through grace and love.

Being a disciple of Christ, however, is not without its challenges. We are called to do battle against the forces of hatred, violence, cruelty, and spiritual evil. Our fight is not with weapons of the world, but with the power of love, compassion, and truth. In the words of Bishop Robert Barron, we must always be ready to give a reason for the hope within us. Our language and actions should consistently reflect our faith, allowing others to see us as people of hope and grace. Yet, there will be times when our efforts to share the Gospel are met with rejection. Jesus instructed the apostles to “shake the dust off your feet” when they were not welcomed. This teaches us not to harbor anger or seek retribution when we face conflict; instead, we should remain focused on our mission, understanding that opposition is part of the journey. Like Christ at Nazareth, we must expect resistance but continue to reach out to those who are lost, rejected, and suffering.

To sustain our mission, we must cultivate a strong spiritual life. Prayer and a deep connection with God are essential. Each of us has a unique role in God’s plan, and we must be ready to engage with the world around us, bringing Christ’s love and message to all we encounter. Like Amos and the apostles, we are ordinary people called to do extraordinary things through our faith. Let us embrace our mission with courage and dedication, knowing that God is with us every step of the way.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy