

Fr James' homily for the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2021



First Reading: Prophecy of Amos 7: 12-15
Second Reading: Letter of the Ephesians 1:3-14
Gospel: Mark 6: 7-13

In last week's Gospel we heard how Jesus' mission fell flat in his own home town. Today, carrying on, we learn that he did just that: he carried on in the same way and called others to go out and do the same, regardless of the response they got. Faithfulness to Jesus, as he is faithful to his Father in heaven, is key to following him and being his disciple in the world.

I mentioned last week that because of our baptism each one of us is called and given grace by the Holy Spirit to be a prophet. We probably react to that in the same way that Amos reacts in the first reading: "I'm not a prophet. I'm not able to be a prophet. I'm an ordinary guy doing an everyday job." So today we say: "I'm not an expert or a professionally religious person. I haven't time to be that. I'm an everyday commuter trying to make ends meet."

Well, think again! Jesus needs you to be his prophet. Am I laying a hopelessly complicated burden of guilt on your back saying that? No. You are the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and you have a unique way to be part of the whole that is the Church:

For example - keep in mind to speak God's words to others. Speak for the good of others. Let the language of faith be naturally on your lips so people can identify you as Catholic. You can tell people you will remember them at Mass. You can say grace publically before a meal in a restaurant. You can use the name of God well in a world that uses his name as a common curse. These things will be noticed and more often than not admired or even envied. You might lead a soul to salvation without knowing it.

As St Peter says: "Always be ready to give a reason for the hope in you." When someone asks you about the faith, what might you say. You don't have to be a great theologian, but if we can't say: "I'm a Catholic because...the Lord Jesus is God with us and he rose from the dead..." or some version thereof, why should anyone listen to anything we say? The basic facts of our faith explain why we believe anything. On a positive practical note, we live in an age of unprecedented resources to help and support us in knowing our faith. Post Covid, why not do a little learning?

Again, remember that because of Jesus risen from the dead, all life matters and has value, dignity and a right to justice. If something is not right in our society; as and

when you see the vulnerable and the marginalised devalued by the strong - drop a line to the powerful and tell them you are doing so as a Catholic. It seems futile, but Jesus tells us to work at that micro level.

Jesus experienced failure. Those he sent out were rejected. As a prophet, don't expect to be popular all the time. Don't be concerned that people make fun of what you believe. Bless them. Pray for them. One day they will thank you for your faithfulness. The Letter to the Ephesians begins with a joyful hymn of praise and prayer to God the Father in the name of Jesus. It was a hymn sung in the middle of Ephesus, a cosmopolitan decadent and uncaring city just like modern London. Our life of prayer and attention to God, all we are doing in our worship at Mass today, roots us deeper in our firm identity as part of the life of the Risen Lord Jesus. Worshipping together is vital if we are to be a prophet in our own individual life. As St John Newman put it:

“God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another.”

Amen.

Fr James and Fr Tom wish you a blessed Sunday. Keep safe and well, and never hesitate to pick up the telephone and be in touch.