

### **Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

I have a reputation with those who know me well as being a bit of a hoarder. I find it hard to throw away things when they wear out just in case I might need them again. I did throw away this week my golf shoes that were falling to pieces. But I took the laces out before I did.

I think Jesus may have thrown out the laces as well or found someone who needed them. Today we hear Jesus telling the twelve that he sends out on mission, to travel light. They are instructed to take nothing with them for the journey except a staff, no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. They were to wear sandals but were not to take a spare tunic. Mark seems to remember a slightly different set of instructions than Luke and Matthew remembered.

Carrying a staff made sense for people who were doing a lot of walking. A staff could also be used to ward off an aggressive animal. But a staff in the Old Testament was also seen as a symbol of authority.

The twelve needed to understand that they were given the authority to act in the name of Jesus and to continue his work of confronting evil. It was because of this authority that they could trust in God to provide for them. They had to trust in God and in the people to whom they were sent. The hospitality that they received

was a sign of God's care for them. That hospitality would be tested at times. Just as Jesus was rejected by many people, so would they. They needed to know that it was still Jesus who was being rejected in them, and they were instructed not to take that to heart but to simply shake the dust off their feet as they walked away.

We notice that they are sent out in pairs to fulfil the mission that Jesus gave them. That can be a reminder to us that the work of Jesus is seldom done alone. We need to have a sense that we are called to work with others in the great work of making Jesus present in our world today. That's why we belong to a Church. But working with others can be difficult. There are times when all of us think that we can get the job done better when we do it by ourselves. We only know the blessings of collaboratively working with others when we see our work as part of a much bigger picture. All we really can do is put a few threads in the tapestry that God is continually creating.

As we listen to today's gospel we may not feel that we have a lot in common with the twelve. We don't seem to be called to preach repentance, cast out many devils and anoint many sick people with oil and cure them. But we are called in a less dramatic way to continue the work of Jesus in whatever context we find ourselves.

We make our homes first of all, a place where those we love can recognise that Jesus is there for them. The love we share with our family members is no less than an expression of the love that Jesus has for them. It is in the home that we learn best what it means to forgive and be forgiven. It is there that we learn how to give thanks for the gifts that God continually gives to us. It is at home that we learn how to pray for others and for the things that we ourselves need.

Jesus' call to the twelve to travel light and to trust in God is a call that we need to hear too. It is hard to hear that call in a consumer society. We are told that we need new things often, and a lot of them. To travel light today could mean that we are beginning to learn how to respect the finite nature of our world's resources. To travel light might mean that we choose to turn off the lights and heaters that we do not need. To travel light may mean that we use a beanie to keep our head warm rather than a radiator.

In many respects the mission that Jesus gives to us is very simple. Whenever we are attentive to the people that Jesus places us with, we are fulfilling his mission. When we listen well to others and respond in love as best we can, then Jesus doesn't ask for anything more. There will be times when our best efforts are not rewarded, or our concern is misunderstood. But this is

when we need to remember again that to speak or act in the name of Jesus is not something that we take on ourselves. We do these things because we are chosen and sent, just as the prophets were.

Amos makes that clear in today's first reading. When Amaziah, the priest told him to go home and stop prophesying, he had to tell him, "I was no prophet, neither did I belong to any of the brotherhoods of prophets. I was a shepherd. But it was the Lord who took me from herding the flock and the Lord who said, Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"

St. Paul very beautifully speaks of the choice that God has made for us all. "Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in his presence". That is really at the heart of our mission as disciples of Jesus. We are chosen to be holy. We are chosen to live in union with Jesus, to allow his life to live in us and to move us to become like him.

This is the mission that we share together as members of Christ's Church. We are called to be like Jesus, so that we can be sent out to make him known to others. The power and authority that we have is to love in his name. It comes from our union with Jesus. Let us give thanks for who we are called to be.