

GO PROPHECY TO MY PEOPLE

A Call To Be A Prophet.

Dear brothers and sisters,
Last Sunday's gospel spoke about our Lord's presence in the synagogue where he met rejection in his own hometown. The people hardened their hearts to the good news he brought. They took offence because they believed that they knew him and his background through and through. What the Holy Spirit spoke through St John in the Prologue came to pass. "He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him" (John 1:11). The other part of this prophecy is also true, "But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God" (John 1:12-13). Those who came to accept the Lord were able to do so because someone told them about the Lord. Some of those in the early Christian times heard the Lord Jesus himself or through the Apostles. The Scripture aptly stated, "But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:14-15).

This brings us to today's theme - The call to be a prophet. In the first reading God called and sent Amos, a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore, from Tekoa in Judah, the Southern part of Israel to the North to prophesy. In the gospel, our Lord Jesus called the twelve Apostles and sent them two by two to evangelize. The million-dollar question is are you also called?

What turn did the calls of Amos and the Apostles take? Amos, without hesitation, began to deliver the message the Lord

gave him to the different cities and lands. However, when Amos came to the king's schismatic sanctuary in Bethel in the North and delivered the message from God, he was not well received. Amaziah, the priest at Bethel not only reported him to King Jeroboam, accusing him of treason, but ordered him to leave the place and go back to his own native land to prophesy. This rejection did not stop Amos from delivering what was given to him. In the case of the Apostles, the Lord sent them two by two, gave them power over unclean spirits and instructed them to rely on God's providence as they embarked on the mission of evangelizing the world. They were not to worry about carrying food, money or luggage. Their business was to preach the Word. The Apostles, like Amos, carried out the mission the Lord entrusted to them and handed over to their successors. All of the Apostles except two sealed the testimony to Jesus with their own blood. Their labor of love is why we are Christians today.

Now is your chance. To the question, are you called to be a prophet? The correct answer is YES!.

"Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone! Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest" (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). The mission of evangelization, the call to be a prophet is first and foremost a work of love. The motivation is love of God and love of neighbor. When this takes hold of your heart, everything changes! Not only that you will drill them into your children and grandchildren, but you will not hesitate to share them wherever you are, at home or abroad. By calling a farmer like Amos and fishermen like Peter, Andrew, James and John, tax collectors and men from other walks of life, the Lord is showing us that this call is for everybody. It is not just for professional prophets. By instructing the Apostles to take nothing for the journey but a walking

stick-no food, no sack, no money in their belts, the Lord patterned the mission of the twelve like the exodus from Egypt.

The Israelites, likewise, were sent out with no bread and one set of clothes, wearing sandals and carrying a staff (see Exodus 12:11; Deuteronomy 8:2-4). Like the Israelites, the apostles were to rely solely on the providence of God and His grace. Perhaps, Mark wants us to see the Apostles' mission, the mission of the Church, as that of leading a new exodus-delivering people from their exile from God and bringing them to the promised land, the kingdom of heaven (Scott Hahn, *Sunday Bible Reflections*, July 5, 2021).

The scope of the work of a prophet is vast. Some of our parishes are dying and the number of our Church members is shrinking. What shall we do? Years ago, under the leadership of the Franciscan and Paulist priests, St Augustine used to go out in the neighborhood and evangelize, can we do the same today? The reason the Church exists is to evangelize. If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it! Our Lord clearly said, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14). Sometimes, you may be ready to evangelize but you are worried about what to say, the Lord reassured, "Do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say" (Matthew 10:19).

Brothers and sisters, when you are engaged in evangelization are you alone on your own? No, the Lord of the universe is with you. He promised, "Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).