**15th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle B**

July 11/12, 2015

Amos 7: 12-15; Eph 1: 3-14; Mark 6: 7-13

We are called and sent by God with the gift of faith! Amos was sent, the Apostles were sent, and you are sent!

Yes, ***faith*** and ***mission***. Today’s first reading and the Gospel speak of faith and the mission we are sent on when we accept this gift of faith.

What is faith? Faith has two aspects to it. The first is the Deposit of Faith or the content of our faith that has been entrusted to the Church by the Lord Jesus himself to protect and proclaim to the nations. The Deposit of Faith is those revealed truths from God which we all must believe which we learn in the Catechism and in what we call the Apostolic Tradition, i.e., the teaching of the Apostles and their successors, the bishops.

The second aspect of Faith is the gift of faith. This gift can be thought of as ***the gaze of the soul on the presence of God, on divine Love, in daily life.*** Yes, the gift of faith allows us to see God’s presence and his love in the midst of our world which gives us the hope that propels us forward into loving God and each other. This gift God freely bestows on us.

Faith brings certain fruitfulness, or fertility you might say to all we say and do. It brings sacrifice also. It brings conversion and change, just like it did with Amos who was changed from a dresser of sycamore to a prophet, and faith will give you a mission or purpose in life.

Faith requires what we go on a mission. We must hand on to the next generation what has been given to us. Our lives have purpose and we must accept it, whatever that may be. Faith challenges us to “venture” or risk a lot for our faith, to put our lives on the line. All of us who are married know this. Marriage demands we become fertile and faithful with each other. It demands we put our lives on the line for each other. Marriage is a mission and it is a witness to the world of the love of a man for a woman, and parents for their children.

This is the message of all of today’s readings. We hear it in the call of Amos. We hear it in the Gospel and how Jesus chose 12 men to be his apostles, gave them the gift of faith, changed and converted them, and then sent them out on a mission to bear fruit, to become fertile, generating new life by their preaching and healing. They were rely on their faith in Jesus and not rely of material things such as tunics, money or extra sandals; rather rely only on their faith in God and in God’s fidelity to them. They were sent out with little more than the gift of faith for one purpose: to be fertile, to generate a new generation of believers.

Indeed, faith-filled and converted witnesses are sorely needed. We especially need married men and women willing to venture much, to become missionaries for marriage, to show the world by example what the true nature of marriage is.

Don’t think you are too small for the job. Amos was just a dresser of sycamores. When the Old Testament uses the phrase we heard, i.e., “The Lord took me from the flock,” it is a way of saying that God converted him. You are like Amos. Amos thought he was just a gardener but God called, prepared, converted, and sent him on a mission. Amos left all behind including his country and his possessions, trusting in God’s call. Amos risked everything because he was given the gift of faith. He was sent out to prophesy to be fertile in converting many people of his time, bringing them back to God, uniting them and reminding them of their dignity as the Chosen People of God.

God calls you, prepares you, converts you and wants to send you out also. “Trust me!” God says. “Have faith!” God insists. “If you accept the gift of faith, you will be fertile; you will multiply many times over the faith which has been given to you.”

Yes, to truly accept the gift of faith is to prepare for a fruitful life and to become a missionary, to become someone who is to bring others to the faith and become children of faith. To accept the gift of faith is to become a father and mother to many, because true faith makes you fertile, and demands that you give witness to that faith and bring others into faith.

Have faith in God who sends you out into life.

Your faith will bear fruit. Your faith will lead to the creation of new life, to a new generation of believers. Your faith will bring newness of life. Faith is never sterile; it is always fertile. You will see God’s presence and your soul will be able to gaze upon him.

You have been called. You have been given the gift of faith. You are now sent out to change the world and bring others to God.

Have faith! Believe! Go forth!