

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

July 15, 2012

Jesus sends out the Twelve in today's gospel with his authority and a set of instructions that could be translated into the following advice:

Take no food, no cash, no overnight bag – not even a second shirt. Okay, you can take a walking stick and a pair of sandals, but that's it. Don't be fussy about where you stay... and eat what's put before you.

They were sent out depending on the kindness of strangers. When you think about it, all they had to carry was the Word of God.

These are words that call for and help bring about a conversion of heart. These are words that free people, sometimes from sickness, or from sin, or from whatever holds them prisoner. They are words that confront the evil that takes up residence in our lives. This Word of God has the power to penetrate whatever barrier the individual or collective heart sets up against it. And it brings with it light, freedom, peace, and life. It has the power not only to inform but to transform.

God's Word moved the author of Ephesians to speak out in a stream of words, blessing God for all God has done in Christ, for the plan of God to bring all peoples together, Jews and Gentiles, so that we, *all* of us, might exist for the praise of God. We already have God's Holy Spirit given to us at baptism as the first installment of our inheritance. This vision of the world will be brought about when all people allow God's Word to dwell in their hearts.

Of course, we can welcome God's Word or reject it. Jesus told the Twelve that there would be those who would reject it. It's always been that way. Amaziah didn't want to hear the Word the prophet Amos was sent to preach. Amos preached a message that attacked the government and its inhuman policies toward the poor. Amaziah had become a court chaplain, telling the king what the king wanted to hear, trusting more in civil religion than in the God of Israel.

That's why he's so quick to run the southern rebel Amos out of town: "Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of Judah."

God's Word continues to go forth, brought to us often by those least expected – in the early days: fishermen, tax collectors, lepers, the ex-possessed, women; in our own day – well, who has brought God's Word to you? People heard God whispering in their hearts, and, even though they didn't always want to, they went out and spoke the Word entrusted to them.

Fifty years ago, the church at the Second Vatican Council called itself a "pilgrim people." I agree that we are a pilgrim people, but sometimes we seem to get stuck in concrete. Traditionalists put their trust in the past. Others put their trust in guns. Others reach for the bottle or drugs that kill. Still others just walk away caught up in the glamour of the moment. What about us?

We come here every Sunday to receive the Word of God and Bread of Life. We come to renew our pilgrim faith. We come to find hope in the God who walks with us always.

Paul A. Magnano

Pastor