

15<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Year B  
July 11-12, 2015

*That we may know what is the hope*

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

The verse just sung before the Gospel today is reflective of our deepest desires as Christians. We beg that the Lord will enlighten our eyes so that we may know what is the hope that belongs to our call. Hope is a virtue rarely in abundance and too often in short supply in our world, and sometimes even in our hearts.

Imagine if you were living in Greece, able to receive no more than 60 E per day (assuming you can even find an ATM with cash in it), your credit cards for the time being unable to be used. What hope would you have for your economy? If you were a Christian in Syria or Iraq, knowing that you are in too many instances tolerated at best, disdained and persecuted, and pushed out of their rightful ancestral homes? What hope would you have for your faith?

Saint Paul reminds us in today's second reading that we are called to be "holy and without blemish" before Christ. Is this not also our deepest desire? There is nothing quite like the feeling of being "right" with God, "right" with others, "right" with the world. We do not experience these moments enough; when they come, we must rest peacefully in them. It speaks to the deepest desire of our hearts and Jesus wants us to experience that peace, even if it is elusive.

In today's first reading, Amos defends himself, rejecting any claim that he was a prophet for hire, a "professional" prophet. He rejected the title, referring to himself as a simple shepherd and dresser of sycamore trees, and yet commissioned by God to prophesy to Israel. The truth for Amos was not a commodity to be bought and sold. And if the truth was difficult to hear, upsetting the people- well, for Amos that was the price of his calling.

On this warm summer day, we would do well to reflect, if but for a few moments, on the nature of our deepest desires. Our Lord knew full well that our deepest desires might not in fact square with the desires of others. Some, for any number of reasons, will not respond favorably to the saving message of Jesus. This mustn't discourage us. The Father "has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens," and in him, we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

If, as a result, we try to enter into someone's spiritual house with the message, and it is rejected, then, according to the Scriptures, we move on. We do not do so in anger or spite, but with a prayerful spirit, we regroup for another try at some other time in the future. The message may ruminate in their minds and hearts; it may take time to mature. We never give up on people.

Jesus today is inviting us to cooperate with him, to be his instruments of liberation, to help others recover their true spiritual freedom. If we truly want the saving message of Christ to be **in** us, he also has to go **through** us. Let's pray for the grace to be the best vessels for this message.

By not being burdened with possessions, the apostles had a "built in" freedom that enabled them to maximize their time spreading the Gospel. Obviously, our lives are different today, but the principle remains valid. We need maximum freedom, both to preach the truth as well as to receive it, unburdened by things that will only serve to choke off the saving message.

There is a huge difference between wants and needs, and if we focus on faith and family first, above all else, we will never allow material comforts to occupy a place in which the Gospel gets pushed off to the sidelines.