

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year B

Am 7:12-15

Ps 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14

Eph 1:3-14 or 1:3-10

Mk 6:7-13

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Just the other day, I was helping to pack the trunk of the car with the luggage of friars,
including my own,
as we prepared to be driven to the airport after a ten day trip to Rome.
One of the friars, after looking at the size of my suitcase, said,
 “Wow, you really need to learn how to pack!”
 “I know,” I said, “I’m never good with long trips.
 I always bring too many things with me.”

In light of today’s gospel,
 I wonder what type of response I would have gotten from Jesus,
 had I said that to him!

No food. No sack. No money in their belts. No second tunic.
 I would have failed miserably!
Okay, so I didn’t have food, but I knew I would be fed on the plane.
 I definitely had a sack, and it was filled maybe not with a second tunic,
 but it had two pairs of shorts, jeans, khakis, black pants, and several shirts.
 I also had a back pack with some gum, magazines, and two books,
 just in case I got bored.
 We wouldn’t want that to happen.

While I admit that I brought too much “stuff” with me,
 it’s still hard to imagine bringing only what Jesus asked the Twelve
 to bring on their mission.
 It seems rather limiting, at least in our time.
 I wonder though if we have a tendency to read today’s gospel passage too literally.
 True, it does serve as a good critique of our society,
 a society that is so caught up with “stuff”
 and the latest Ipods, cell phones, and palm pilots,
 but that would be our way, wouldn’t it,
 only looking at what the Twelve weren’t allowed to take with them.
 Maybe we shouldn’t be concentrating here on what they *can’t* bring.
 Maybe the point is for us to look at what they *can* bring with them:

Jesus allows them to have two things with them: a walking stick and sandals.

In one way or another, both provide support on the journey, don't they?
But what else can they bring?
Notice that Jesus doesn't send any of the Twelve alone.
Jesus sends them out *in twos*.
Jesus sends them out with very little so that they can rely *on each other* along the way,
so that they do not become distracted with their belongings
and lose sight of their purpose of the journey:
to preach repentance, to heal, to do what Jesus does.
Jesus sends them out in pairs in order to support one another
when they are not met with hospitality and have to shake the dust off their feet.
Jesus sends them out in pairs to remind each other that this mission is not his own:
the purpose is of God and the Kingdom,
and just in case after preaching and healing,
things start to get to one's head,
right next to him is another to ground him once again in this purpose.
In other words, Jesus sent the Twelve out in twos
so that each could remind the other *where he came from*.

Knowing one's identity and roots is at the heart of being an authentic prophet.
Prophets know where they come from.
Amos certainly did, as we hear in the first reading.
After his conversion, Paul knew who he was, and was quick to tell others.
And Jesus, in his prophetic role, certainly knew Whom he was rooted in.
Traveling simply, without many goods,
except for the presence of a companion,
would allow each disciple to remember his call,
where he came from and *why* he was sent.
We can just imagine, that as they walked along,
one might say to the other (perhaps in frustration),
"Whose idea was this anyway? Oh, yea, Jesus."
Had they so many things with which to distract themselves,
they may never have gotten to ask the question.

Do we ever get to ask the question? Or are we too busy putting suitcases in the back of cars?
Are we aware that we are on a journey
and that not only have we been given companions but are also companioning others?
Do we ever remind each other in our daily lives that we are all on mission,
to preach the good news and to heal?

In a few moments we will gather around this table and break bread with one another,
which not coincidentally is the root of the word *companion*.
It is in the breaking of the bread, in this companioning,
that we are reminded who we are,
where we have come from,
and where we are going.