

**SPIRITUALITY**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

cf. Eph 1:17-18

**R.** Alleluia, alleluia.

May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts, that we may know what is the hope that belongs to our call.

**R.** Alleluia, alleluia.

**Gospel**

Mark 6:7-13; L104B

**Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two**

**and gave them authority over unclean spirits.**

**He instructed them to take nothing for the journey**

**but a walking stick—no food, no sack, no money in their belts.**

**They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic.**

**He said to them,**

**“Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave.**

**Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you,**

**leave there and shake the dust off your feet**

**in testimony against them.”**

**So they went off and preached repentance.**

**The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.**

**Reflecting on the Gospel**

Jesus has not been deterred by his rejection at Nazareth and continues to teach among the surrounding villages, but now it is time to send the Twelve to do what he has been doing. When Jesus called these disciples, Mark described them as “those whom he wanted and they came to him” to “be with him” and be sent “forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mark 3:13-15; NABRE). We might be excused for wondering if they really are ready, for al-

though they have been with Jesus as he taught, exorcised, and healed, and had experienced his rejection by his hometown synagogue, their main recorded response to him has been the accusation of not caring much about them in the middle of the storm, and impatience with him over the “interruption” of the hemorrhaging woman! But, for our consolation, Jesus is willing to work with flawed disciples, and still dares today to send out men and women like ourselves to be instruments of the healing power and authority of God. What we hear in this gospel is both challenge and consolation to Mark’s Christian community and every community that, through baptism, is called and sent on Jesus’s own mission.

Now the “see, judge, and act” apprenticeship of the Twelve is to be tested in their first mission. Equipped only with the authority of Jesus’s word and the memory of his example, the Twelve are sent out like their ancestors, with exodus urgency—with their walking

sticks and sandals, for they are on a new and urgent journey to free enslaved bodies, hearts, and psyches as Jesus has done. They are to travel in pairs, with respect for the Jewish tradition that required that the validity of witness must be verified by at least two people (Deut 17:6; 19:15). There is to be no dallying or packing bags with things that are not really needed and will only become an intolerable burden along the way. Their missionary survival kit consists of the authority of Jesus and his word, the providence of God, and the hospitality of those who will open their hearts and homes to the Twelve. The one tunic they are allowed may also be symbolic of the single-mindedness that Jesus expects of those who, as Paul wrote to the Galatians, “have clothed yourselves with Christ” through baptism (Gal 3:27; NABRE). No matter what the quality of the hospitality offered to them, the disciples are to accept this and stay put. Searching for more congenial accommodation or company is not to be part of their journey. For people to welcome the Twelve, knowing that they have associated with the taboo, marginalized people, will spread the kingdom of compassion, and offer the possibilities of a welcoming reentry into religious and social relationships for the outcasts and shunned who have been healed.

If they are not well received, the disciples are to leave, not responding with any harsh words, but merely with the Jewish symbolic gesture of shaking off from their feet the dust of the unwelcoming place, as Jews did when returning to Israel from foreign soil. All that the inhospitable household was left with was insubstantial dust, rather than the word of God. We all need to be honestly and



humbly discerning about when to stay and when to leave a particular mission, “and take upon’s the mystery of things, / as if we were God’s spies,” said King Lear (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*). In the Christian sense, we are to be “God’s spies,” reconnoitering the possibilities for announcing the reigning presence of God in human lives in our own situations. And we must be prepared to fail, as Jesus and his followers failed, but without turning such failure into a career of self-pity.

**Focusing the Gospel**

**Key words and phrases:** Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out.

**To the point:** In chapter 3 of Mark’s gospel Jesus “appointed twelve [whom he also named apostles] that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (3:14-15; NABRE). Now, three chapters later the Twelve are given their first mission: to go out “two by two” to preach repentance, drive out demons, and cure the sick. With this first commissioning of the Twelve, we see that Jesus is not intent upon carrying out his work of proclaiming the kingdom of God on his own. Instead he seeks co-workers to join in his efforts. It is the same pattern we see throughout salvation history of God inviting human beings to be his collaborators, and it continues up to today. How are you living out your call to go forth and build the kingdom of God?

**Connecting the Gospel**

**to the first reading:** In the first reading, God invites the prophet Amos, who was called “from following the flock,” to go and prophesy to God’s people. Upset at Amos’s words, which he considers demoralizing the people, Amaziah, the priest, demands that Amos return to his own home in the southern kingdom of Judah and there “make [his] bread by prophesying.” Amos has a quick response, however: he is not a professional prophet like other “false prophets” of his day who made their living telling those in power what they wished to hear. He only prophesies due to his call from God. Amos is in a very similar position to the twelve apostles. We know that of the Twelve several were fishermen and at least one was a tax collector, but we don’t hear of any of them having any particular “religious” credentials that would make them obvious choices to carry out Jesus’s mission of spreading the good news to all people.

**to experience:** At times in our life of discipleship, we might be called to accept challenges that we feel ill-equipped to face. And yet, like Amos and the apostles, the only qualification we need is to discern the will of God in our lives and to respond to it faithfully.

**Connecting the Responsorial Psalm**

**to the readings:** In the first verse of today’s psalm, the psalmist assures us, “I will hear what God proclaims / the Lord—for he proclaims peace.” In the gospel and the first reading, Amos and the Twelve have listened deeply to God’s word and now it is time for them to proclaim it to others.

**to psalmist preparation:** We encounter God’s proclamation of peace in many ways: reading the Bible, opening our hearts to God in prayer, and listening to the prophetic voices of others. How do you listen deeply for the voice of God in your life?

**PROMPTS FOR FAITH-SHARING**

In the first reading Amos retells how God called him from being a shepherd to “prophesying to my people Israel.” When in your life of faith have you felt called to speak out against injustice or oppression?

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In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul writes, “In [Christ] we are also chosen.” What does it mean to you to consider yourself “chosen” by God?

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In the gospel Jesus sends the disciples out “two by two.” Who are your closest collaborators in living the life of discipleship?

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Jesus instructs the disciples to only bring the bare necessities with them on their mission. How are you being called to let go of the “non-essentials” as you follow Jesus?

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