

JULY 15, 2018

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1 [AM 7:12-15](#)

Responsorial Psalm [PS 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14](#)

R. (8) Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Reading 2 [EPH 1:3-14 OR 1:3-10](#)

Gospel [MK 6:7-13](#)

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.

HOMILY:

- A couple of weeks ago, a young teenager said to me, “Father, how do you make your homilies almost the exact same length each week? At first, I considered this a compliment on my expertly crafted preaching. But then it occurred to me: Wait a minute . . . I’m being *timed* each week! So, having already heard from Sr. Mary, and with the risk of disappointing that timer, a much briefer homily. . .
- We’ve heard a bit about the great follower of Jesus, St. Francis, who had such an influence on our parish’s nearly 75-year history. Born 300 years after St. Francis came another Francis, this one St. Francis Xavier, from the Basque country between Spain and France. But it was in the Orient that this Francis gained his sanctity. From his life, we hear, “Francis preached to the natives of Baranura [Indonesia], and after a week went on to another island (or city) which goes by the name of Rosalao, where his labors were entirely unfruitful, except in the conversion of a single convert . . . In another little island called Ulate, also close to Amboyna, a great success awaited him, to compensate for the disappointment at Rosalao, which last place he had left solemnly shaking the dust off

his shoes against it” (From *The Life and Letters of St. Francis Xavier, Vol. 1*. Ed. H. J. Coleridge. London: Burns & Oates, 1872, p. 394). Having failed on Rosalao, he shook the dust of that experience from his feet and went on to success on Ulate.

- Here, St. Francis Xavier takes literally Jesus’ command in the gospel that, when preaching the Gospel, if the message is rejected by this listener, his apostles are to “shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them.” ***What are we to make of this command to Jesus’ apostles, and how are we to live this command?*** A close look at the biblical word for “dust” reveals a particular meaning: not just dust around the house, but rather “grime” or “rubbish.” In the context of the Jewish concern for ritual purity (things that render one ungodly), Jesus identifies the rejection by the listeners to the Gospel message as literally an ungodly act (it is the Word of God, after all!) and one ought to be cleansed from it (“shake that dust!”) before continuing the sacred work of sharing the Good News of the Gospel.
- At this moment, we remember the famous adage attributed to that first St. Francis (the one from Assisi) who said, “Proclaim the Gospel at all times—use words when necessary.” The most compelling “proclamation” without words of the gospel is love, especially a deep, sacrificial love. When this message is not received, not reciprocated, it is tempting to despair and stop loving. Yet, if we, at that moment, remember Jesus’ command to “shake the dust” of that unloving moment as “not of God,” then we do not despair but leave that unloving response behind us and continue on our mission to proclaim the Gospel in love at the next chance. In other words, Jesus’ command directs us to keep loving with His love and not be deterred when it is not received.
- So, the next time, inspired by your faith, you choose to be an apostle of Jesus by loving another, and it not received, “shake the dust” of that ungodly moment and try again. This is how we are to live Jesus’ perplexing command and continue to seek to show others God’s life-giving love.