

15 OTB.18; Amos 7:12-15; Eph 1:3-14; Mark 6:7-13

*In the time of the Korean conflict, a little village came under heavy artillery fire. In the village stood a Catholic church. Outside the church, mounted on a pedestal, was a statue of Christ. However, when the smoke of battle cleared away, the statue had disappeared. It had been blown off its pedestal and lay in fragments on the ground. A group of American soldiers helped the priest to collect up the fragments. Carefully they put the statue together again. **They found all the pieces except the hands.** They offered to fly the back to America and have hands made for it.

But the priest refused.

I have a better idea', he said. 'Let's leave it without hands. And we'll write on ... the pedestal the words: **FRIEND, LEND ME YOUR HANDS.**

In that way passers-by will come to see that Christ now has *no hands* but ours with which to raise up the fallen; *no feet* but ours to seek out the lost; *no ears* but ours to listen to the lonely; *no tongue* but ours to speak words of comfort to the lonely.'

(*McCarthy, *New Sunday & Holy Day Liturgies, Year B*)

This little incident reflects the message of the Gospel. Jesus involved the apostles in his work. He shared his divine mission with them. He gave them his own authority and power. *No doubt they made mistakes,*

... which is not surprising since they were ordinary human beings like us.

God has a long history of working with us

Amos was a simple shepherd and from the southern kingdom of Judah. Yet, God sent him to preach a message of repentance to a people really not his own, the *northern Kingdom of Israel*. Just think a “foreigner” telling the locals what God wanted! (would we listen!) Likewise, most of the apostles were fishermen, not known for their *religious expertise*. Yet, Jesus didn't hesitate to share his work with them. Even more surprising,

... the day came when he entrusted his entire mission to them.

I wonder if they felt “qualified”. Would you? Do you?

From the moment we are born, life has challenged us with

new questions we have never answered before,

new choices we have not made before,

and new things to do that we have not done before.

What experience did any of us have at tying our shoes before we did it?

What experience did we have at going to school before we went?

What experience did I have at being a priest or most of you at being married before we got there? And *what experience* do we have of being middle aged, or old, or retired, or widowed, or dying till we get there?

In a word, we have all had ample reason to say to ourselves many times, “**There ought to be an instructor or at least an owner’s manual here somewhere.**” *

2 That's the very spot in which the apostles found themselves in today's gospel. Jesus had just told them to go out into the countryside on their own and preach the *good news*. In essence he said, "*You just do what you've seen me doing, & don't take any money or supplies along with you. They'll just hold you down and get in your way.*"

Can you imagine how they felt, being told to act as "stand-ins" for Jesus?! I think they were scared because they knew they weren't ready. They hadn't been with Jesus all that long – maybe a year or two at most; they hadn't yet taken his message all the way into their hearts much less understood it; and they certainly *hadn't done this before*. But, ***because Jesus asked*** them, they put on their sandals & tunics, took hold of their walking sticks and went. And, lo and behold, the Gospel tells us they were successful: they spoke the good news and cured the sick.

How did that happen?

It was not by accident. For, if in one way they were very unprepared, in another, they had all they needed - God had seen to that! Because they carried with them all the goodness & power that God had put in them when God made them ... human.

And they carried Jesus himself - *in their hearts*.

Finally, since Jesus had sent them out ***two by two*** - each one had at his side a friend, a companion, given to walk with him and see him through his journey. So they completed their journey, not perfectly, not without mistakes, not even, I am sure, without their usual sins. But they did complete it and they did do much good.

And, God's kingdom drew a little closer to fulfillment.

(Some ideas from *Sunday Mornings*, Clark, 15 OTB)

Now look at us *if we take our baptismal commitment seriously*, we need to look around to see where our talents, abilities, & even limitations, might be of use. Motivated people can make a difference (remember, we are the living, breathing, Body of Christ – whom **God has blessed us, in Christ, "with every spiritual blessing in the heaven"**- Eph1:3-14. **We don't work alone**. Can you help people run cooperatives, teach or help the uneducated, answer a phone as a volunteer, work with St.V DePaul, CC, L of C [charities] **the needs are real**. (Homily Helps Franciscan Media)

Christianity is not a 'Sunday-only' religion. It's a way of life.

Christianity is not a personal devotion. It's a community working together.

It's taking that heartfelt compassion and using our gifts/limitations to lend a real live hand. Discipleship is not about bringing fire and brimstone – Jesus rejects that. Discipleship is about being authentic, compassionate, & willing.

Willing, to make God's love real to someone around you, one person at a time.

At this Liturgy of Discipleship, remember these words attributed to

St. Francis of Assisi, "preach the gospel at all times, if necessary use words."

Jesus could use an extra pair of hands!