

## Homily 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2024

A missionary priest friend of mine who was, after Ordination, assigned to teach in the local seminary was frustrated and disappointed because all he had dreamt about was 'going out' to serve in a mission in the developing world. Undeterred he volunteered to serve the sick and infirm in the local hospital convinced that hospital chaplaincy was a real missionary 'going out'. One night around 2am he was bleeped by the hospital and immediately responded. Inside 20 minutes he was in the Intensive Care Unit where an Italian man had been brought after a massive heart attack. The nursing sister, who was a Catholic, explained that the man was 'at death's door'. The priest immediately went to the man and prayed over him anointed him and gave him absolution. The next evening when he turned up for duty the same sister who had called him quietly took him aside, 'Fr you are in deep trouble, the man you anointed last night is the Grandmaster of The Orange Lodge and his family are 'spitting feathers' and would like to speak with you...

The priest had simply followed Jesus' instructions to the disciples, in today's Gospel, to 'go out' with nothing but The Good News of Jesus. He had responded immediately, with Christ's love and compassion to a man whom the nurse assumed wrongly to be a Catholic: "Then he summoned the Twelve and began to send them out. He instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. They were to wear sandals but, he added, 'Do not take a spare tunic.' So, they set off to preach repentance; and they cast out many devils, and they anointed many sick people with oil and cured them."

In The First Reading today God calls Amos to 'go out' and speak his word, to prophesy in spite of the threats and the ban of the sanctuary priest, "Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, said to Amos, 'Go away, seer;' get back to the land of Judah; earn your bread there, do your prophesying there. We want no more prophesying in Bethel; this is the royal sanctuary, the national temple.' 'I was no prophet, neither did I belong to any of the brotherhoods of prophets,' Amos replied to Amaziah, 'I was a shepherd, and looked after sycamores: but it was the Lord who took me from herding the flock, and the Lord who said, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'" Like the young missionary nothing would stand in Amos' way of God's command to 'go out' and proclaim His Word.

In today's Second Reading St Paul in his Letter to The Ephesians makes the importance of 'going out' to proclaim the Good News very clear when he states, "He has let us know the mystery of his purpose, the hidden plan he so kindly made in Christ from the beginning to act upon when the times had run their course to the end: that he would bring everything together under Christ, as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth. Now you too, in him, have heard the message of the truth and the good news of your salvation, and have believed it; and you too have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the Promise, the pledge of our inheritance which brings freedom for those whom God has taken for his own, to make his glory praised.

Each of us, as disciples of Jesus, are called to 'Go out' with nothing but Christ's Good News of hope, love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness and love. It is 'beautiful on the mountains to see the feet of those who bring Good News': the faithful spending time with a parishioner with dementia; supporting a friend in marital difficulties; giving comfort to a grieving parishioner; bringing The Eucharist to the elderly and housebound; listening to, empathising with and encouraging those who are struggling with their faith in 'the dark night of the soul'; offering prayers for and giving hope to those who are ill; visiting the sick in hospital and care homes; praying with those suffering from anxiety and worry; providing Christian fellowship opportunities for those who live alone; feeding the hungry through food banks; going out to the marginalise in the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities; giving hope to those in fear and desperation...It is truly uplifting and inspiring to see so many disciples of Christ do this and more as they witness to Jesus of Nazareth

The young missionary priest was also responding to Jesus' command to 'Go out', when he rushed to the hospital ICU. The man's family, staunch Orangemen from the West of Scotland, far from berating him embraced him like a brother, greatly appreciating what he had done for their father. 'Thank you Fr. because you came to Dad when he was sick and lonely, and prayed with him. Whatever else you did it did him no harm and the doctors tell is he is over the worst.'

'Going out' in Christ's name, you never know the potential for doing good, even in the most unlikely of circumstances. 'My ways are not your ways, and my thoughts are not your thoughts.' says The Lord. So let us all continue to 'Go out' and always be open to 'The God of Surprises.'