

Pastor's Letter

July 14, 2024—15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear Church Family,

As we all know, the church is suffering from a shortage of priests. This is a serious problem, and we need to be encouraging vocations among our young men. But with this challenge comes a reminder and an opportunity for growth in discipleship. In the past it was easier for us to think that we could just let priests worry about spreading the faith. These days lay people, both women and men, are taking a more active role in the life of the church. This is the way it should be.

In our first reading the prophet Amos comes into conflict with Amaziah, priest of Bethel, who basically tells Amos that he is intruding on Amaziah's turf. Amos should go back to Judah where he came from to "earn his bread by prophesying." Seriously? Is that all there is to being a prophet or a priest? Earning a living? This is clerical careerism at it's worst. Amos' response shows us what being a prophet and servant of God is really about. He tells Amaziah that he is not a "professional" prophet. He is a farmer, but God has given him a message and a mission, and he has to obey.

The mission of sharing the good news of God's love is not just for a particular authorized and certified group of people. It is the work of all the faithful. Some of us are called in a special way to serve, equip, strengthen and guide the people of God through holy orders, but all of us, ordained and lay people, are called to share in our own way in the prophetic, priestly, and kingly ministry of Christ. Everyone who is baptized into Christ has received the Holy Spirit and has the gifts needed to make the love of God known in our corner of the world. Paul reminds us in our reading from the letter to the Ephesians that the Father, "has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens."

And that's all we need. When Jesus sent the Twelve out to preach and to heal, he sent them with his authority and told them not to take any special precautions, but to trust in God to provide. They went out in faith and many people's lives were changed because of them. As disciples today, we also have the power to change people's lives for the better. If we listen to the Father and if we are generous in our sharing of the spiritual and material blessings we have received, we can have an impact. It's a big job, and it's much too important to be left to the religious professionals. It takes all of us doing our part.

Blessings,

Fr. Scott