

Homily for July 14th and 15th 2018

15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

The Tranquility of Order

One person armed with the Gospel of peace can change the world. St. Telemachus did. He was a monk who lived in the 4th century. He felt God saying to him, "Go to Rome." He was in a cloistered monastery, but he put his possessions in a sack and set out for Rome. When he arrived in the city, people were thronging in the streets. He asked why all the excitement and was told that this was the day that the gladiators would be fighting in the coliseum, the day of the games, the circus. He thought to himself, "Four centuries after Christ and they are still killing each other, for enjoyment?" He ran to the coliseum and heard the gladiators saying, "Hail to Caesar, we die for Caesar" and he thought, "this isn't right." He jumped over the railing and went out into the middle of the field, got between two gladiators, and tried to stop them. The crowd became enraged and stoned the peacemaker to death.

When the Christian Emperor of Rome, Honorius, heard about the monk he declared him a Christian martyr and put an end to the games. It's believed the year of St. Telemachus' death was 391 and the last gladiatorial fight in 404.

Peace is something that is hard to come by in a world like this. However, it is a quality that is repeatedly described in the Scriptures that inspired St. Telemachus to take the action he did.

Take Amos as an example. He was like Telemachus. When Amos lived the land of Palestine was divided into two separate countries. Israel in the North and Judah in the South. Of the two, Israel was for more powerful, having its religious centre at Bethel. Amos was from the southern country of Judah. He had been called by the Lord to go northward and speak God's message to the Israelites.

Listen again to how the priest of Bethel, - he was like the Pastor of the Parish – greeted Amos:

And Amaziah (he's the priest) said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there; ¹³ but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."¹

Amaziah was saying in effect, get out my face you foreigner. We want nothing to do with you or your message. How dare you unsettle our way of life and challenge us like this!!!

Listen to the clarity of Amos' answer:

¹ [*The Holy Bible*](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Am 7:12–13). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

¹⁴ Then Amos answered Amaziah, “I am no prophet, nor a prophet’s son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, ¹⁵ and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’ ²

Amos was not a professional prophet, or we could say, he wasn’t ordained. But his heart and mind were gripped by the Lord in such a way that he was clearly directed to go and preach to Israel.

Pope Gregory the Great who lived between 540–604 and was Pope from 590 until his death in 604, in reflecting on the call of Amos, and other biblical figures like him, celebrated the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. He wrote:

How good it is to raise up eyes of faith to the power of this worker, the Holy Spirit, and to look here and there at our ancestors in the Old and New Testaments. With the eyes of my faith open, I gaze on David, on Amos, on Daniel, on Peter, on Paul, on Matthew—and I am filled with a desire to behold the nature of this worker, the Holy Spirit. But I fall short. The Spirit filled a boy who played upon the harp, and made him a psalmist; on a shepherd and herdsman who pruned sycamore trees, and made him a prophet; on a child given to abstinence, and made him a judge of his elders; on a fisherman, and made him a preacher; on one who persecuted the church, and made him the teacher of the Gentiles; on a tax collector, and made him an Evangelist. What a skilled worker this Spirit is! There is no question of delay in learning what the Spirit teaches us. No sooner does the Spirit touch our minds in regard to anything than we are taught; the Spirit’s very touch is teaching. The Spirit changes the human heart in a moment, filling it with light. Suddenly we are no longer what we were; suddenly we are something we never used to be. FORTY GOSPEL HOMILIES³

Isn’t that beautiful writing? What happens when we allow the Holy Spirit to get a hold on us? Our minds and hearts are filled with the truth and beauty of God’s will and we discover a quality described as peace. Peace is the fruit experienced by those who are learning to rightly order their lives and are discovering:

“Suddenly we are no longer what we were; suddenly we are something we never used to be.”

In today’s Psalm we have one of the most vivid expressions of peace in the Old Testament:

***Mercy and faithfulness will meet;
Righteousness and peace will kiss each other. ⁴***

Mercy is the compassionate love of God shown to us most fully in the person of Jesus. Faithfulness is the character of the person who is steadfast and dependable in displaying mercy

² [The Holy Bible](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Am 7:14–15). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

³ Ferreiro, A. (2003). [The Twelve Prophets](#) (pp. 109–110). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁴ [The Holy Bible](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Ps 85:10). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

to others. When these two attributes meet, we then read that righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

Righteousness is the ordering of our lives according to the purposes of God and peace is righteousness' beloved companion. The psalm goes on to declare:

***¹¹ Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
and righteousness will look down from heaven. ⁵***

Two of the words from our previous verse are mentioned again. Faithfulness we can say is like the flowers and righteousness the rain and sunshine giving life to the garden. In the Old Testament we discover there that peace is the blessing resulting from living faithfully to one's covenant with God. It was this theme at the heart of all the prophets.

St. Augustine in *The City of God* captured succinctly what is expressed poetically by the Psalm when he said:

***Peace is "tranquility of order"*⁶**

In our Gospel reading for today, the Lord came to establish his kingdom, which can best be described the tranquility of order. Therefore, he sent out the Twelve so that others could discover what they had.

"Suddenly we are no longer what we were; suddenly we are something we never used to be."

And yet, as the example of Telemachus and Amos make clear, not everyone will be receptive to this Kingdom and the order it wants to establish. Therefore Jesus says:

***Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹ If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them."*⁷**

This is another way to say no one can be coerced into receiving the news of the Kingdom of God. But those who have chosen to reject the invitation will have consequences described as "a testimony against them", symbolized by shaking off dust from feet.

For you see our lives are moving in one of two directions. Either the disorder and chaos that we know as hell, or the perfect order and communion that we know as heaven. Each one of us is

⁵ [*The Holy Bible*](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Ps 85:11). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

⁶ City of God 19:13

⁷ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Mk 6:10–11). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

invited to make a choice. But oh, how we can be threatened by such a message that we choose to stone and shun the messenger.

Today the Church calls on us to take our place more fully resolved to be the presence and voice of God in the world so that the Church's prayer this day will become ever more our own as we prayed in the Collect:

**O God, who show the light of your truth
to those who go astray,
so that they may return to the right path,
give all who for the faith they profess
are accounted Christians
the grace to reject whatever is contrary to the name of Christ
and to strive after all that does it honor.⁸**

⁸ [*The Roman Missal: Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Revised at the Direction of Pope John Paul II.*](#) (2011). (Third Typical Edition, p. 475). Washington D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.