

WEEKLY REFLECTIONS FOR
Ordinary Time

Sunday 14 July | 2024



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**
— VICARIATE FOR FAITH & MISSION —

Reflections on the Readings for the 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time 2024

Gospel Reading – Mark 6: 7-13

Having left Nazareth (cf. last Sunday's Gospel) Jesus is now on a missionary tour of the area spreading the message of the Kingdom of God. In contrast with the other Gospels St Mark does not give us much in the way of details about what Jesus teaches. He concentrates much more on action. Here the latest action is to send his closest disciples out in pairs on their own mission of spreading the news of the Kingdom. Notice how the instructions about not being overloaded with excess baggage makes the enterprise lean and agile. As such the disciples will be able to respond very quickly to new challenges and situations. Whilst, of necessity, a body like the Church must have structures to maintain its work and mission, these instructions of Jesus are a reminder to us that "mission" always has priority over structure. At times – both in the past and currently – the structures can appear to be more important than the reason why they are there in the first place. The same can be true of 'structures' that we build in to our own lives, "Are they fit for purpose, or do we need to change some of our habits to respond to the needs of today?"

First Reading – Amos 7: 12-15

In the time of Amos prophets, rather like the priests, usually came from certain families. It was an inherited role which was passed down through the generations. People would consult them on all manner of dilemmas in their lives. Unfortunately, because good news pays better than bad, the tendency of this caste was to gloss over any negative messages that should have been given – especially when people were living comfortable lives and were lax in their observance of the Covenant. In today's extract one of the leading priests has challenged Amos who has been preaching uncomfortable truths, among other things about the exploitation of the poor by the rich. His complaint is that Amos does not belong to one of the families from which the prophets come. Indeed, he is a foreigner, he comes from the Southern Kingdom of Judah and has no right to be spreading such ideas in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Amos readily admits his lack of pedigree but insists that his call to prophesy comes directly from God. Amos is the first in a new kind of prophet whose vocation comes directly from God whose message will be heard.

Second Reading - Ephesians 1: 3-14

Today we begin a series of seven extracts from one of St Paul's most deeply reflective letters which is packed full of major insights into the heart of the Christian faith. Many scholars have questioned whether this letter was, in fact, written by Paul himself, but no one doubts the similarity of its theology with other, undisputed Pauline letters. Here, in our first extract from the beginning of the letter, St Paul gives us a long prayer of blessing, giving thanks to God for all that God the Father has done for us in Christ: anything and everything we have in the way of God's grace comes in and through Christ. This is the very core of all of St Paul's writings. In Christ we have true freedom.



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