

## **SIMPLICITY IS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE**

### **Lectio Divina of the Fifteenth Sunday B**

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**Opening prayer:** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Lord, fill our life with your grace. Grant us simplicity in life. We beseech you to save us from the distractions of vanity and false lure of inordinate desires. Grant us the grace of a quiet and humbled mind. May we learnt to be meek and humble in heart like Jesus. Deliver us from the belief that we are self sufficient. Show us the need of you. We put our trust in You. Refresh our spirits as you walk beside us. Encourage us that we never concede to the malicious and wicked plans of enemy. Remind us that we can always count on You. Grant us strength when we are weak. May the burdens of our life never steal the simple pleasures and joy of our inner life. We pray that we may become simple souls, following you in absolute trust. May we always pray that everything depends on you and work as though everything depends on us. In Jesus' name. Amen

**First reading: A reading from the book of Prophet Amos 7:12-15**

Amaziah, priest of Bethel, said to Amos, "Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of Judah! There earn your bread by prophesying, but never again prophesy in Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary and a royal temple." Amos answered Amaziah, "I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to a company of prophets; I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. The LORD took me from following the flock, and said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

**(The Word of the Lord/Thanks be to God).**

**Commentary:** For a long time, the territory we call the Holy Land had been divided between a northern kingdom called Israel and a southern kingdom known as Judah. The city of Jerusalem was in Judah. In the northern kingdom, at Bethel, there was a very ancient shrine with several priests. These Bethel priests sponsored the rich people and acted as cronies of King Jeroboam. The Prophet Amos was sent by God to these priests with the demand that they speak against the exploitation of the poor by the powerful. Amos had come from Tekoa in the southern kingdom of Judah to Bethel in the northern kingdom of Israel, to pronounce God's judgment on Israel and its King, Jeroboam. As a prophet, Amos foretold the overthrow of the throne and shrine by the hand of God. Amaziah who was the high priest told Amos that the King was angry with him and was seeking to kill him. It would be better for Amos to look for his own safety. Amos retorted that he was not a professional prophet; he was a shepherd and dresser of sycamores. He had become a prophet only because God had sent him to deliver a message to Israel and its King

**Responsorial psalm 85: Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

I will hear what God proclaims; the LORD —for he proclaims peace.  
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him, glory dwelling in our land.

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss.  
Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven.

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

The LORD himself will give his benefits; our land shall yield its increase.  
Justice shall walk before him, and prepare the way of his steps.

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

**Second reading: A Reading from the Second letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians 1:3-14**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth. In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

**(The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God)**

**Commentary:** The second reading is a prayer praising God for what God has accomplished in Jesus. Paul advises the Ephesians to count their blessings instead of focusing excessively on their inadequacies and deficiencies. In this prayer, Paul also reveals a Divine secret to the Jewish Christians: It was not God's plan to keep the Jews as His Chosen People exclusively, but for all mankind to be saved, so that Gentiles would eventually be included! That inclusion had begun formally when Jesus sent Paul to preach to the Gentiles. Hence, the Jewish and the Gentile Christians were to respect and help each other, as both were now adopted children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus.

**Gospel reading: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark 6:7-13**

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick—no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them." So they went off and preached repentance. The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

**(The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ/ Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ).**

**Meditation: Guidelines for mission trip:** While sending the disciples on mission, he gives them a few guidelines for their mission trip. No food, No sack, No money in their belts, no second tunic, only a walking stick and sandals on foot. It is good to know the background of Jesus' time. The first century Jews used money belts to carry coins for their journey. They also carried a sack for their basic needs in which they brought with them extra clothes. They used a walking staff as a defense against the serpents and wild animals on their dangerous journey in the mountains. Sandals were necessary in their tiresome journey. Why carry no food? The person who works for people has every right to stay, eat and rest from the sacrifice of his beneficiaries. In other words, Jesus encourages them to trust in God's power and providence in their missionary work and secondly the gospel preachers are to be supported by their own hearers voluntarily and joyfully.

**The meaning of Jesus' instructions:** Why did Jesus send the Apostles in pairs? Because according to Jewish law, two witnesses were needed to pronounce a truth. Going two-by-two brought with it the authority of official witnesses. By Jesus' instructions, it is clear that that his disciples should take no supplies for the road but simply trust in God for their requirements. God, the Provider, would open the hearts of believers to take care of the needs of the disciples. Jesus' instructions also suggest that the apostles should not be like the acquisitive priests of the day, who were interested only in gaining riches. Instead, as disciples of Jesus, they must be concerned with "giving" rather than "getting." They should be walking examples of God's love and providence. By making their mission trip this way, they would also have the maximum of freedom and the minimum of burdens in their preaching and healing ministry. Jesus wanted his apostles to be rich in all the things which really mattered, so that they might enrich those who came into contact with them.

**"Shake off the dust from your feet:"** Jesus knew that when the apostles went into any town or village to evangelize, a family or house would take them in, welcome them, and give them what they needed, because hospitality was an important religious tradition in Palestine. By His stern instruction, Jesus seems to be saying, "If people refuse to listen to you or to show you hospitality, the only thing you can do is to treat them as an orthodox Jew would treat a Gentile or a pagan." The Rabbinic law stated that the dust of a Gentile country was defiled, so that when a Jew entered Palestine from another country, he had first to shake off every particle of the unclean land's dust from his clothing and sandals.

**Messages for our life:** We, too, have a witnessing mission. Each Christian is called not only to be a disciple but also to be an apostle. As disciples, we are to follow and imitate Jesus. As apostles, we are to evangelize the world. We are called to share with others not just words, or ideas, or doctrines but an experience, — our experience of God and His Son, Jesus. Like the apostles, like St. Francis of Assisi, like St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa), we are all chosen and sent to proclaim the Gospel through our living. Since we are baptized, Jesus is calling us in our working and living environment to evangelize, to invite people to know, love, serve, and follow Jesus for the rest of our lives. An important part of evangelism is the simple act of inviting a friend or family member to join us in worship. This is where reconciliation between persons and God is most likely to take place. We do not have to commit verbal assault on someone with our convictions. A simple invitation, offered out of a loving and joyful heart, is the most powerful evangelistic message of all.

**We have a liberating mission:** Although many people don't believe in real demonic possession in our age, there are many demons controlling the lives of people around us, making them

helpless slaves. (nicotine, alcohol, gambling, pornography, promiscuous sex, materialism, consumerism and so on). All of these, or any one of them, can turn people into slaves. We need Divine help to cooperate with Jesus to become instruments in liberating ourselves and others from these things, helping them and ourselves to recover our freedom. We are meant to help people to cure their sicknesses – bodily, psychological, and emotional. As a family member, a friend, a colleague, an evangelizer, when we work with Jesus, we can truly exercise a healing influence.

**Simplicity is a spiritual discipline** like silence, solitude, contemplation, meditation, prayer, fasting and alms-giving. Simplicity does more than we can imagine. It makes us free, joyful, willing, and hospitable and kind, above all it helps us to develop a sense of gratitude for everything that we have. Simplicity is very much important in our spiritual journey towards our destiny. It helps us to have detachment from the worldly pleasures and enables us to have priorities and concerns for God and humanity.

**Less Travel makes a travel more Pleasure**. It is a golden rule of travel. This is very much true in our spiritual journey towards our final destiny. In our life journey, we should minimize our luggage of worldly and bodily pleasures so that our spiritual journey becomes a joyous one. We must know the difference between needs and wants. The globalized culture creates so much wants making people prey to this sickening culture. We must remember that material objects can give us momentary happiness but they may not give us inner joy and freedom.

**How to grow in the spirituality of simplicity?** Our life, resources, blessings and opportunities are a great commitment and therefore we have to open our eyes and see our society, the poor and the homeless. American Church is a giving church. God has truly blessed this great nation and this blessing needs to be shared with the less fortunate. If we realize that God has blessed us, then let us start sharing our resources with the less fortunate. Mahatma Gandhi says, "If you keep more than you need, you are a thief". Let us not forget that the only meaningful and weightless baggage we will be able to carry is our good deeds when our earthly journey is over. Keeping that eternal journey always in our mind and heart, let us make our earthly journey a simple and humble one, accommodating anyone who might join us in our journey of life. Amen

**Concluding prayer:** Heavenly Father, Thank you for this evening in speaking to us through your words. Thank you for giving me life through Your Son Jesus. Help us to be grateful for what we have, to remember that we don't need most of what we want and that joy is found in simplicity and generosity. Open our eyes to see that you know what is best for us. Strengthen our faith to take you at your word. we surrender our all to you. We surrender our burdens, worries and fears. We lift up before you our loved ones, our job and our finances. Relieve us of our pain and suffering and ease our troubled heart. Culture a heart of contentment within us so that whether in fulness or in need, may we appreciate all we have and so that we may walk closely with you. (Hail Mary/ Blessing)