

My Brothers and Sisters,

As much as going on vacation is good, it is always good to return home.

Each of today's readings has practical implications for our everyday life.

One of the most beautiful verses in the Old Testament is Micah 6:8: *"What is good has been explained to you...this is what God asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God..."* Scripture scholars tell us that this verse captures the main message of each of the three previous prophets. The prophet Amos calls us to act justly; the prophet Hosea calls us to love tenderly; and the prophet Isaiah calls us to walk humbly with our God."

Amos was a shepherd from the kingdom of Judah who was called by God to preach in the northern kingdom during the eighth century before Christ. In today's reading, the priest Amaziah expelled Amos from Bethel. Amos' response is what is of interest to us today. Amos responded to Amaziah that he was no prophet nor did he belong to any company of prophets. In other words, he was not a professional prophet, nor did he belong to the prophets' union. God chose a shepherd to proclaim his word, specifically to denounce injustice.

In today's language, this means that God does not just choose priests, sisters, and parish professional staffs to proclaim the Gospel. The Second Vatican Council emphasized that it is you, the laity, who are called to bring Christ to the world. Specifically, you are called to practice justice in the larger society, and you who are called to challenge injustice wherever and whenever it occurs in society. This has particular relevance this year. In this election year as in every election year, we need to ask ourselves to what extent we are willing to bring our Catholic Christian values into the public debate.

Today's second reading is a prayer of praise to God for God's wonderful plan of salvation. It sees all of human history as salvation history. It sees Jesus Christ as the center of God's gracious plan. It reminds us that we have been chosen by God, chosen to be God's adopted sons and daughters through Jesus Christ and the salvation he won for us by his death on the cross.

This reading, then, challenges us to examine our own world view. To what extent do we recognize God's presence, power, and activity in world events and in our own lives? In other words, do we see the world and human history with eyes of faith? Also, it is about priorities. Do we think about life after life? Do we think about the potential eternal consequences of our choices today?

My brothers and sisters, in today's Gospel, Jesus sends out the apostles two by two. Why did he send them out two by two? Because it is easier to proclaim and live the Gospel in community than alone. When I give marriage instructions, I always remind couples of St. Paul's call to support one another in faith. It is much easier to live our Christian faith with others than alone. When we live our Christian faith in community, we encourage one another and we hold one another accountable. Believing, practicing Catholics and Christians call forth the best in each other.