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July 10, 2021

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Peter, Paul and Mary, that great biblically named trio, left us a legacy of good teaching in rhythm and harmony. Singing with humor and irony, they encouraged us to hope for humanity in spite of our failings. If we were to choose a song to depict Jesus' apostles, it might be "Right Field," the first-person ballad of an awkward boy who was the last one picked every time the kids chose their teams. Of course, the kid has unexpected success, and like Jesus' apostles, felt that he was suddenly empowered — a perception the disciples would enjoy and gradually see mature through a series of corrections as they learned what it means to be chosen as a disciple of Christ.

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Amos 7:12-15

Psalm 85

Ephesians 1:3-14 or 1:3-10

Mark 6:7-13

Today's readings reflect on being chosen. The prophet Amos, a simple farmer, never asked to be a prophet but that didn't exempt him from being sent to call king and clergy to live as they ought. For that, he suffered ridicule and rejection. We know well from the Gospels that Jesus chose the disciples, not vice versa, and the more we study their lives, the more we wonder why he chose such fallible folk to carry on his mission. In between those two stories, Paul offers us a profound meditation on God's choice to share divine life with us. Together, these readings invite us to a mid-summer reflection on who we are and where we are going.

Paul's reflection begins by reminding us of God's great love, recalling all the blessings we have received. In Paul's theological imagination, before time began, God created humanity so that we could enter into union with God and one another through identification with Christ. Paul seems to be inviting us to sit back and marvel

at a whole series of truths that goes something like this: Before the world began, God chose us to be holy, sharers of the divine nature; Christ's life, death and resurrection offer the proof of God's forgiving, unifying love; through Christ we have access to the wisdom and insight that enable us to live in this grace. All of this combines to say that we are invited to exist in the joy of God's love which is another name for God's glory.

That's plenty to fill an afternoon of wonderment!

After contemplating the heights Paul describes, the Gospel calls us back to the simplicity of discipleship. Mark's rendition of Jesus' sending the 12 out to preach is starkly short. With detailed instructions about how to dress and what not to pack, Mark seems to pay more attention to their traveling conditions than to how they were to carry out the mission or what they were to say. Mark's essential point is that Jesus gave the disciples his own power and authority, and that is precisely what makes sense of his explanation that they should travel with nothing but a walking stick and sandals — indispensable equipment for going the distance. They were to go out as Jesus did, vulnerable and dependent on those willing to receive their message.

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Like Jesus, the disciples were the antithesis of the temple retinue. Without criticizing the religious leaders who waited for the faithful to come and offer sacrifice, Jesus sent the disciples out to their people with the simple, earthshaking message of metanoia-conversion. They were missioned to call people to open their minds and hearts to the nearness of the reign of God. As Mark tells the story, the disciples were instructed to preach their message first by their way of meeting and serving others, and only afterward with the verbal metanoia-message of God's love and humanity's potential to participate in the reign of God.

Like the last chosen kid and Jesus' disciples, we too are chosen, not because of our talent or achievements, but because we are willing to be here to answer the call. That's all the qualifications required. Knowing that can humble us enough to make

us the kind of servants the world needs today. In order to be able to carry the message to others, we first have to follow Paul's advice and bask in the wondrous warmth of God's love for us. Jesus' awareness of God's love formed the basis of his authority, and that is what he shares with us. We can preach Jesus' style of metanoia only when we are motivated by awareness of God's love for us.

The fact of our baptism tells us who we are as God's chosen ones. Awareness of God's love not only tells us where we are going, but gives us the authority to reach out to others who need to experience that love and eventually even hear an explanation of it. We're not simply chosen; like the first disciples, we're empowered.

A version of this story appeared in the **June 25-July 8** print issue under the headline: More than just chosen.