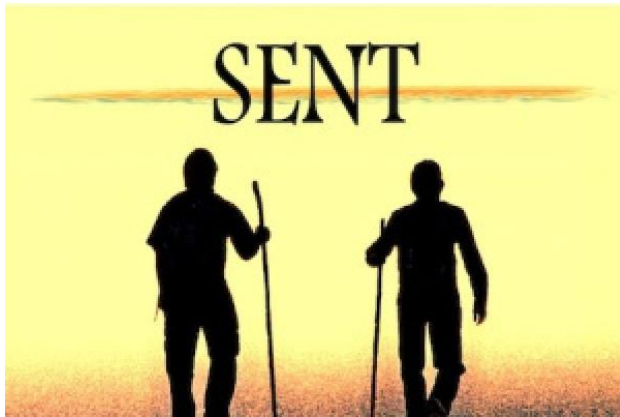


## Homily – July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time



I know some of you have been watching the series called “The Chosen.” It is, by far, the best portrayal of Jesus and his early followers I have ever seen. I’m watching it by the old fashion method of DVDs that I purchased. However, if you are able to access this series by

going to The Chosen app or The Chosen website or even YouTube or Facebook or Netflix, it would be well worth your effort. Some episodes have even come to the big screen. The other night, I just happened to be watching the episode that is described in today’s gospel account—the summoning and the missioning of the apostles. There are four important things to keep in mind regarding the calling of the original 12 apostles. And, since we are all baptized, we also have a calling. So, these four features apply to us as well.

Firstly, the apostles are not doing their own work; they are doing God’s work. They are not only following Jesus’ directions, but they are also empowered by his spirit. He is acting in and through them. This authority, which comes from on high, is also in that first reading from the prophet Amos. Amos lived some 700 years before the birth of Christ. He felt God’s call in his life yet wondered why God would call him to anything important. Amos was from the southern kingdom of Judah but sent by God to preach in the northern kingdom of Israel. Out of obedience to God, that’s what Amos did. He was not well received, though, as we heard in that first

reading, especially by the high priest Amaziah who told him to go back home to Judah where he belongs. When asked what credentials he had, Amos said, “Credentials! I don’t have any. I’m not a prophet; I’m not even the son of a prophet. I herd sheep, and I harvest fruit from trees. But the Lord told me to go to Israel and prophesy. So, here I am. If you have a problem with that, take it up with God. I’m just being faithful to what God told me to do.”

Amos wasn’t a prophet by trade. He didn’t have the sponsorship, the backing you might say, of the Temple or synagogue authorities. He had something much more important; he had God’s backing. And because God called him, Amos didn’t have the option of opting in or opting out. He could not “not” do it. Personally, it gives me a degree of comfort and reassurance to see a framed graduation diploma on the wall of the doctor or dentist who is treating me. You don’t get that with me. The only document I ever got framed is a document I obtained on a fishing boat in Newfoundland that verifies that I actually “kissed the cod.” That’s it. Like Amos, I ask you to trust me, and if you can’t, then take it up with God.

The second feature about the Apostles’ call and missioning--and ours--is that they were told to travel light. They are to dispense with extra food, clothing, and money. This was not a question of asceticism or sacrifice; this was a question of simplicity and trust. 1,200 years later, St. Francis of Assisi demanded the same thing of his followers. He asked them to trade in their clothes in favor of a simple tunic. Not only that, but the tunic was also not to have any pockets in order to lessen the temptation of them holding on to anything that wasn’t given to them by God. They were to work and beg for their daily bread and trust that if God

looked after the grass of the field--which is here today and gone tomorrow--then God would look after them. What marked the Apostles' mission was preaching, yes. But, what defined their mission was that they were dependent on nothing other than the person next to them and the knowledge that God had enough faith in them to call them in the first place. And here we are panicking if we have misplaced our smart phone for all of five minutes!

A third message for the first Apostles, and for us, is that we should take seriously the possibility of failure. Sometimes in life, you just have to leave things alone and move on. The temptation, when failure occurs, is to blame someone, to sue someone, or call down lightning bolts from heaven and burn up those who are responsible as James and John, the Sons of Thunder, wanted to do. Jesus has another suggestion. He wants us to shake the dust off our feet and to carry on the best we can. It's hard when you've invested a lot of yourself to think that way and shake the dust from your feet, but sometimes that's exactly what needs to be done. Some people have invest everything of themselves in a marriage that just isn't working. Others have given it their "all" in a job that isn't fulfilling. Perhaps they need to find the courage to shake the dust off their feet, cut their losses, and move on to where they can be more alive.

Fourthly, Jesus called the twelve and sent them out two by two. Perhaps Jesus sensed that the greatest asset of a disciple along the way would be a fellow disciple. Getting back to the series "The Chosen," the sending forth in pairs is portrayed so well. Matthew, the tax collector is paired with Simon the Zealot. What a combination! What a formula for instant disaster! Matthew, a Jew, is

collecting taxes off the backs of his fellow Jews. He is working for the enemy, the Romans. Because of that, all Jews see Matthew as a traitor, one who has turned his back on his own people. Enemies are one thing, but traitors are the absolute worst. In the movie, *The Chosen*, Jesus has paired Matthew with Simon, the Zealot. While Matthew is seen as selling his soul to the pagan Romans. The Zealots, on the other hand, hate the Romans and anyone, like Matthew, who collaborates with them. In Jesus' wisdom—which defies all logic—he has put these two, Matthew and Simon together. Matthew didn't choose Simon and Simon didn't choose Matthew. But they both heard Jesus preach, previously, that they were to love their enemies. They also heard Jesus preach that they didn't choose him, but he chose them.

Can we believe that in God's wisdom we have been chosen to live something together and to bear witness to what God is doing among us, even though we are so opposite to someone sitting four seats away from us? Can we believe the calling is more important and more powerful than anything that can divide us? Can you believe that the one most dissimilar to you may hold the key to your spiritual growth? Matthew needed Simon, and Simon needed Matthew. Apparently, when they came back from their first mission, they didn't come back saying, "Never again, and never with that guy." They came back rejoicing. Jesus knew what Jesus was doing even though they didn't.

Four points: It's God's work, not yours. Travel lightly and trust that you will be gifted with all that you need. Be ready for struggle, even failure. Your greatest asset, in all of this, will be your fellow believers, companions on the journey.

The Church and the Church's mission is bigger than any of us. The Church is not something we go **to**, but rather something we are sent **from**—and also the people we live among.

~ *Fr. Phil*