

## 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time – 120715 HOMILY Deacon Brian Cordeiro

Our life and times are characterised by the plethora of How To books. For example, how to study a new language, how to learn a new software; how to understand the stock markets. But the greatest challenge for each of us is to be an evangeliser. Have you ever wondered how do I carry out my main mission-that of being an evangeliser, bringing people to Jesus? Where do I find the How To book to becoming a good evangeliser? Well, if you ever had such thoughts, you have the answer today since all that you need to know about being a good evangeliser is contained in today's Gospel and readings.

Here is how you and me are to be evangelisers. Firstly, Jesus tells his apostles to carry a walking stick and wear sandals. In our time, sandals would be replaced by walking shoes or sneakers. A walking stick and sneakers indicate that it is a long journey. Those who go on pilgrimage to places like Compo Stella often use a walking stick to help them on the long journey. The mission of evangelising is a long journey. Be prepared for it.

Secondly, we have to learn not to carry anything that is based on your own understanding of what is required and your own resources. Rely on God to provide. So no money; no food, no sack with belongings. It is not our place to take all steps to ensure our success as evangelisers. God makes it His business to look after his prophets. We are not to be encumbered by the weight and burdens of this life.

This does not mean that we are to live only in the present and not make provision for the future. On the contrary, whilst living in the present and providing for the future, at all times, we are to keep a heavenly perspective and not merely a material, earthly outlook. As St. Paul says to the Ephesians, we have an inheritance, we have salvation through Christ's blood, we are adopted children of God, are blessed with every spiritual blessing. Our life must reflect that.

Thirdly, as evangelisers, accept hospitality along the road but be prepared for rejection and failure. **The prophet Amos stands out as a wonderful model of how a prophet must transmit a message despite the odds and despite threats.** In the first reading, the prophet Amos has been asked by the Lord to carry a most unpleasant message to the people of Israel.

The Lord was angry with his people and Amos brings a hard message that destruction was soon to befall them. The land was that time divided into Israel and Judah. Israel had the seat of the king Jeroboam at Bethel. When Amos brought the message of God's anger and destruction to Bethel, even the priest Amaziah refused to listen and even conspired against Amos telling King Jeroboam that Amos had prophesied that the king would be killed. And then he warns Amos to leave Israel and go to Judah and not to return to Bethel or else. Amos says "Are you kidding? I was not a prophet at birth and my father was not a prophet. I was minding my own business as a herdsman when the Lord called me and gave me a message. Therefore, I am not going to stop doing what I have been asked to do.

In fact in the verses that follow, Amos issues a warning once again to Israel and to the priest Amaziah that the worst is coming their way. He does not cave in to the threats.

Fourthly shake off the dust of rejections and failures. If we have no way of shaking off the dust of yesterday's failure from our feet, the dust clings to us and accumulates and weighs us down. The result is depression and despair. We give up. We quit instead of going on to a new village, to a new project. But Jesus does not want us to be quitters. He wants us to be women and men who begin again each new day. New day, new challenges, new opportunities!

So we know the how to evangelise But what does evangelizing mean? Does it only mean bringing people to church? No, it is much more than that. It could mean bringing fallen away Catholics to church. But it means much more. It means influencing both believers and non-believers to let Jesus play a role in their lives. It means showing by your behavior that you are a Christian that you are only a pilgrim in this world but you are on the way to the next.

We in the Catholic church have wonderful models of evangelizers-St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis Xavier, Blessed Mother Teresa, Saint Brother André. Who is responsible for evangelizing? Is it the priests? Is it the deacons? Is it the faith first catechists? Is it those who are not any one of the above? Is it not all of the above?

In our Parish, John Armour was a great evangeliser. John was not a priest, he was not a deacon, and he was not a catechist. Yet he was one of the most powerful evangelisers that I have met in my life. What was the secret of his success? Was it because he knew a lot? I don't think so even though he was a wise and intelligent man. Was it because of sense of humour? I don't think so though he had a great sense of humour.

I think John Armour was a great evangelist because he made everyone he met feel special. He made those who came to church and those who did not, those of St. Luke's, those at McGill where he worked, those in the hospitals where he ministered, young, adolescents, youth, not so young and seniors feel welcome and special, by his words, his hugs, his jokes. He made them feel that they were precious in his eyes as they are in God's eyes.

Let us pray that we use these wonderful models that motivate us to bring more and more people to Jesus, Be ready for the long haul, do not rely on your own resources but those of God, be determined like the prophet Amos and shake the dust and move on each day. This in brief is our How to evangelize. Evangelize everyone, everywhere and every day.