

HOMILY SUNDAY 15 – B  
“Reach Out and Reach In”  
(Amos 7:12-15; Eph 1:3-14; Mk 6:7-13)

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A young boy, after being baptised, was crying on his way home in the family car. His parents could not understand, as this should have been a happy occasion for them all. Finally they were able to get the reason he was crying from him when he blurted out, “The priest during the ceremony said that he wanted me to be brought up in a good Catholic Christian home, and I wanted to stay with you guys!”

Do you see yourself as both a disciple, and a missionary?

Live the two dynamics of being Church: Reach out, and Reach In.

The readings today invite us to first of all, be renewed within, to reach in, and then we can be sent out to evangelize, to reach out.

There are times when, inspired by the Holy Spirit, St. Paul waxes poetic. Such is the case in the second reading today, when Paul is almost beside himself as he tries to put into words what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. God has destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ. God has freely bestowed on us his glorious grace in the Beloved. God has redeemed us through the blood of Jesus and has forgiven us all our trespasses. He has privileged us with insight into the mystery of his will, set forth in Christ. God has given us an inheritance of praise and hope in Christ. We have been marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Given all this spiritual richness so lavishly poured upon us, what is to be our response? I would suggest that it is two-fold: to reach inwards, and to reach out - to repent and be renewed interiorly, and then to go out and evangelize others.

It is St. Paul who highlights our need to “reach in” when he says in that same second reading that we have been chosen in Christ to be holy and blameless before him in love. Before we can go out to others, we must first be healed and renewed ourselves. We must first personally experience and receive that forgiveness and healing of Christ through the power of the Spirit. Before we can preach repentance to others, we must first repent ourselves, reach deep within the darkest recesses of our own being, admit, name, confront and confess our sin. We must go even deeper and root out the source of that sin, our sinfulness (that which makes us sin), our defects of character, our shortcomings, and bring them into the light of the healing power of the Spirit of Jesus.

I once received a card in which a high school student had written “May the Lord shine his light into the darkest areas of your life.” I was amazed at her insight and her wisdom! That is exactly what must happen. This is true repentance, true sorrow, true conversion, true metanoia – letting Christ shine his forgiving and healing love into the darkest areas

of our lives. And that happens best in the sacrament of reconciliation – something that we should do on a regular basis if we are to be true disciples of Jesus Christ.

Now the gospel mandate can kick in. After Jesus had spent time with his disciples, teaching them and forming them, he sent them out in pairs to continue his ministry. They do not do this on their own. They go with his authority and power – to preach repentance to others, and heal them. Having experienced the love of Christ, they could now go out to share that love with others.

Evangelization belongs to the very nature of the Church. To be a Catholic Christian is to be an evangelizer. Pope Paul VI expressed this so well in his groundbreaking encyclical, *Evangelization of the Modern World*, in 1975, and I quote:

*¶Let us therefore preserve our fervor of spirit. Let us preserve the delighting and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow. May it mean for us - as it did for John the Baptist, for Peter and Paul, for the other apostles and for a multitude of splendid evangelizers all through the Church's history - an interior enthusiasm that nobody and nothing can quench. May it be the great joy of our consecrated lives. And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good news ... from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives to that the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world. ¶*

One of the times that I felt most like an evangelizer was as chaplain of the Beauval Indian Residential High School. There was a student there who knew almost nothing of Jesus, other than that he had something to do with Christmas and gift giving. She took Christian Ethics, including a course on *Understanding the Bible*, and one called *Jesus and You*. She also got involved in the Search weekends, and became a believer in Jesus. She even gave a talk on a Deeper Search weekend in which she shared her experience of expressing her new found Christian faith through her own First Nations culture. What a life-giving moment that was for us as a team, and for me as a missionary among the First Nations people.

The Eucharist we celebrate today supports us in our gospel call to reach in, and then to reach out. We are first of all, personally and communally, washed clean in God's Word, strengthened within through this Sacrament, and then sent out to share the Good News with all other.

So remember, the whole Church is called to reach in, first of all, to be renewed, and then to reach out, to be missionary and share the Good News with others.