

Call to Worship: 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time, July 14-15, 2018

At some point in our lives, there may arise circumstances which will push us out of our comfort zone. We may be asked to take on a task for which we do not feel prepared or which interferes with the way we prefer to do things. Or we may face disagreeable or even dangerous or challenging occurrences. And we will be expected to act.

In today's first reading, Amos is acting in response to God's call to bring a message to the rebellious Israelites. Taking on the role of prophet was a far cry from his accustomed quiet life as a shepherd, and for his efforts he receives only abuse and ridicule. But he did as God requested however uncomfortable it was.

Mark's gospel today describes the occasion when Jesus instructed his disciples to leave him and go two-by-two to carry his gospel. This good news would be accompanied by bringing healing to other folks, and they would travel simply, taking "potluck" wherever they went. It was a tall order for the disciples, - something completely outside their experience, - but they did it. And there is no record that they grumbled.

How might any of us respond, should we be confronted with a significant challenge this week, or even months from now? Would we be inclined to avoid it, ignore it, claim that "I've never done it this way," contrive to pass it off on someone else? St. Paul's letter today should give us confidence when we are overwhelmed. He certainly knew what it was like to be out of his comfort zone. When he composed this letter to the Ephesians he was in prison, and someone else had to deliver his message, perhaps even write it down at his direction. His greeting rings out in gratitude for the graciousness of God given through his son Jesus Christ, and he asserts strongly his conviction that his hearers (and us) have been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, "which is the first installmenttoward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory."

May those words of encouragement echo in our hearts and minds this week, whatever it has in store.

Maureen F McDermott