

Parish of St. Joseph, Morningside
15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, B

Pulpit Plan

Theme	:	Prophets to structures of power!
1 st Reading	:	Amos 7:12-15
Responsorial Psalm	:	Ps 85
2 nd Reading	:	Ephesians 1:3-14
Gospel	:	Mark 6:7-13

- An old woman was found guilty by a court of law of shoplifting at a grocery store. In her defence, the lady confessed her crime and said she had stolen the food as she was very poor and her only son had died in an accident leaving behind a wife and three children who were dying of hunger. The owner of the grocery store insisted that the lady be punished so that others learn a lesson! The judge was a very kind and compassionate man but after going through all the documents he looked up and told the poor lady, “I am sorry you have committed a crime. No matter what your situation, a crime is a crime, so you are liable to criminal charges.” The poor lady had to pay a fine of R1000 and if she could not pay she would be sent to jail for 6 months.
- The judge then took off his hat and put R100 in it. He then turned towards the courtroom and said, “Each one of you present in court is fined R100 for letting a whole family starve so that this poor old lady is forced to steal! The clerk will now collect your fines!”
- The clerk brought the collection up to the judge – there was R2000 in the hat! The fine of R1000 was paid off and the judge gave the remaining money to the old lady so she could take care of her family.
- Justice is vital for the well-being of a community!
 - Over many years, we in South Africa witnessed the tremendous harm done to our people because there were different laws for different people!
 - Over these last few days, we have seen the great harm done to the peace and stability of our country because one man considers himself above the law!
- All of us have a real responsibility to uphold and abide by laws that are just and reasonable because they are made for the Common Good!
- And as the little story highlighted, justice and our kindness and concern for others, are intimately intertwined!
- When we disregard or misuse the law, we harm the Common Good and others suffer –
 - Is that not exactly what we have seen played out over many years in the past and now over these last few days in Nkandla?
- All three of today’s readings deal with God’s determination to accomplish his purpose in history!
 - What is that purpose?
- The establishment of his Kingdom –

- a kingdom of truth and life,
- a kingdom of holiness and grace,
- a kingdom of justice, love and peace!
- These readings – just as I said last week – make it clear, that God’s message will not always be well received –
 - even among people in authority and leadership – people who should know better!
 - Conflict results!
- The first reading tells of the conflict between the ‘official’ priest – Amaziah – at the royal sanctuary and the prophet Amos
 - Amaziah wants to ban Amos from preaching there because his message of justice for all is unfavourable to the current king!
- Governments, and political parties, can end up working so hard to preserve themselves, their power and their sizable salaries, that they do so at the expense of the values of God’s kingdom and the good of others – even those who elected them!
 - They proclaim themselves and their own ideologies!
- But for us who have been given the responsibility – the mission – of proclaiming Jesus Christ, we should not allow ourselves to be put off by their show of power or taken in by their extravagant promises!
- St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians speaks of God’s kingdom as uniting all things in Jesus Christ – including Gentiles and Jews!
- Up until then, this would have been a difficult message for the Jews to hear
 - They lived in a divided world in which they understood themselves to be a ‘chosen people’ – set apart and better than others!
- When people consider themselves above the law, they consider themselves better than the rest of us!
- The responsibility of a Church faithful to the Word of God, is that we remain a prophetic voice for justice and kindness in our society!
- This may sometimes irritate community and political leaders
 - But God will not be silenced or his purposes stopped!