

15th B July 12, 2015

God does some wonderful things, like creating Pluto and the human wisdom to get there...creating heaven and sending Jesus so we can get there. But the Lord God seems to have ability whatsoever in human resources—a terrible Personnel Director.

Take Amos, for example; he is called to be a prophet. A prophet doesn't foretell the future—they speak for God. Amos is good with sheep, and he can handle any goat. And he apparently knows how to dress sycamore trees (no, I don't know what that means either!) And God calls him to be a prophet—to speak for God—to northern Israel—not even his home. Go figure how God chooses Amos or anyone else to do His work.

When I was a little kid, my big brother Bernie went off to join the Navy. And with the certainty of a six year old, I said, "Bernie, when you come back from the Navy, be sure to bring a pair of black shoes with you. I'm going to need them when I become a priest."

I was six years old. Not well raised. From a pretty unhealthy family. Called to lead people to heaven! God is one strange personnel director. (By the way, I'm wearing those very shoes today.) To this day, I still wonder how the Lord could possibly have chosen me to be a priest. "What were you thinking?"

And you parents: I have it on good authority that newborn babies do not come with an Instruction Book. Do parents ever wonder how God could entrust them with the miracle of this little child? Do parents ever look up to heaven and say, "What were you thinking?"

What was Jesus thinking when he send the Twelve off to drive out demons? Peter and John were great with tilapia: maybe Jesus thought the fish smell irritated the unclean spirits! Matthew the tax collector ran a pricy tollbooth at some crossroads; was he qualified to preach repentance? Simon the Zealot was an angry, violent man; the Zealots wanted to overthrow the Romans by force.

There they were, the Twelve, sent forth by Jesus: untrained, cowardly, uneducated, sinful, egotistical, doubtful, some of them illiterate, one of them a traitor. (Think about that: Judas worked miracles!)

And here we are, a hundred generations later, believers celebrating the Eucharist together, part of 1.5 billion Christians throughout the world. What Christ did through those 11 men!

Pope Francis writes that it is the responsibility of every baptized Christian to spread the Gospel, to give witness to the good news of salvation. He says, *“Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus...”*

Many of us will say, “I have no idea how to do that. I don’t even know what to say to my children.” I suspect the Twelve did not, either. Do you imagine that all their children became believers? Pope Francis gives some helpful advice:

Francis writes that “the testimony of faith comes in very many forms, just as in a great fresco there is a variety of colors and shades; yet they are all important, even those that do not stand out. In God’s great plan, every detail is important, even yours, even my humble little witness, even the hidden witness of those who live their faith with simplicity in everyday family relationships, work relationships, and friendships. There are the saints of every day, the “hidden” saints, a sort of “middle class of holiness,”...that middle class of holiness to which we can all belong.

So, we can ask God, “What were you thinking to choose me to be baptized?” And then, and then we can all have some part in the great fresco that is the Kingdom of God: even the Twelve, even me of all people, and you too.