

15 (B)

Last Sunday Jesus was made to feel very unwelcome when coming back to his own folk in Nazareth because he 'rattled their cage' in challenging their small-mindedness. You also get the feeling from today's First Reading that the prophet Amos received similar treatment centuries before.

The Prophet Amos was told to back off and do his preaching elsewhere. In his day, a change of heart was called for from the powers that be if the disadvantaged people were to receive a fair deal. However, they told Amos where to go. Because of the recent budget they say that 13 million people are going to be worse off but I doubt if their cries will be heard.

But there are other reasons why the message of Christ is unwelcome.

Generally speaking people don't like change and find it hard to take on board less familiar things. Perhaps we're too stuck in our ways and cannot countenance anything new or challenging which might tempt us out of our comfort zones and live the gospel more radically. The Gospel is Good News. But it's often not the good part of the News which we find difficult but the new part. When Jesus had once finished preaching the people said: 'here is a teaching that is new and with conviction behind it', in stark contrast to their own hypocritical leaders who used safe language in order to prevent their own privileged position ever being threatened. Jesus on the other hand cared nothing for power or status but only the Truth – even when it hurt.

So if I'm only at home with the familiar and predictable then the unfamiliar will be put on hold. *If Peter had closed down his options, he would never have left all and followed Jesus, a man he barely knew. Paul would never have ventured to go on so many precarious missions for the sake of the gospel and Abraham would never have ventured beyond the confines of*

his homeland and embark on an uncertain future.

But there are other reasons why the message of the gospel may be unwelcome.

When Jesus sent the apostles out on a mission he urged them to travel light. He told them to carry no haversack, no bread and no money. *Most of us are familiar with people who when taking a holiday and are not happy unless their suitcases are bulging at the seams with all sorts of unnecessary things - an extra pair of this and a double pair of that.* But our minds could also be cluttered up with endless trivialities and inconsequential things that render us incapable of welcoming the refreshing message of the gospel and even less capable of responding to it.

If I cannot rid my life in this world of inconsequential things, then I'm hardly going to be ready for fresh challenges in my spiritual life.

Since our true homeland is in Heaven and the road there is narrow and precarious we must not be afraid of fresh gospel challenges especially when they pertain to our eternal salvation. Heaven is home to the brave and adventurous.