

15 (B)

Last Sunday Jesus must have felt very uneasy when some of the locals from Nazareth cold-shouldered him. They were envious of his growing reputation as a teacher and healer. You also get the feeling from today's First Reading that the prophet Amos received similar treatment centuries before.

Amos was told to back off and do his preaching elsewhere. In his day, i.e. 750 B.C. poor people were not receiving a fair deal from those in positions of influence. So they showed the prophet Amos the door. But there are other reasons why the message of Christ is often unwelcome.

Generally speaking people don't like change and find it hard to take on board less familiar things. Perhaps we're too set in our ways for anything new or challenging to tempt us out of our comfort zones and live the gospel more radically. Pope Francis said recently that we must not be afraid to take risks when it comes to living the gospel. The Gospel is Good News. But it's never the good part of the News which we object to 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'. This was in stark contrast to their own hypocritical leaders who used tired worn-out formulas when teaching. 'More of the same' would always ensure that they held on to their positions of power and influence in the Jewish society of their day. Jesus on the other hand cared nothing for power or status but only the Truth – even when it hit hard. He was forever 'rocking the boat'.

So if I'm only at home with the familiar and predictable then the unfamiliar will always 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, an old man at the time, would never have left his*

homeland and embark on a very 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 Heaven is our destiny and the road there is narrow and winding, we must not be afraid to travel along it uncertain of what we'll find round any of its corners. Heaven is only home to the brave and adventurous.