

## 15 (B)

*Last Sunday Jesus must have felt very let-down 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 people of influence and Amos was forever driving the message home. So they showed him the door. But there are other reasons why God's word can fall on deaf ears.

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 rabbis who used tired worn-out formulas when teaching. 'More of the same' would ensure that they would always hold dominance over the people. Jesus on the other hand cared nothing for power or status but only the Truth, even when it hit home and the Jewish leaders at the time didn't like him for it.

So if I'm only at home with the familiar and predictable then the unfamiliar will always be a forbidding place. *If Peter had opted to stick rigidly to his fishing, he would never have left all and followed Jesus, a man he barely knew. Paul would never have ventured to go on so many hazardous 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. Mother Theresa would never have left her cushy job teaching middle class children for the slums of Calcutta.*

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 are not happy unless their suitcases are bulging 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 that keep us from taking on board the radical message of the gospel and even less capable of responding to it.

*Since Heaven is our destiny and the road there is narrow and winding, we must not be afraid to travel light uncertain of what we'll find round any of its corners. Heaven is the home of the brave and adventurous. Could I be described as one of them?*