

15 (B)

Last Sunday Jesus must have felt very let-down when some of the locals from Nazareth cold-shouldered him when he paid a surprise visit home. You also get the feeling from today's First Reading that the prophet Amos was at the receiving end of similar treatment centuries before.

The prophet Amos is shocked and outraged by what he sees - the rich living in luxury and becoming richer and richer on the backs of the poor. His ministry involves railing against these injustices. Being stung by his words, the offenders tell him to back off and do his preaching elsewhere. But Amos stays put.

But there may be 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. So are we averse to taking risks when it comes to living the gospel of love more profoundly.

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 keep the people down and stifle their initiative. Jesus on the other hand cared nothing for power or status but only the Truth, which can often be challenging and demanding in itself.

So if I'm only at home with the familiar and predictable then the unfamiliar will hold little attraction for me. *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 risked his life going on so many hazardous missions 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 and head for the slums of Calcutta where she gave her life caring for the destitute and the poor.

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 at the seams with all and sundry, most of which is unnecessary.* 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 we must not be afraid to travel light, along this narrow but straight road which leads to life eternal. The brave and adventurous travel that way. Are we brave enough to join them?