

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – B  
Fr. Chad S. Green  
Holy Family Catholic Church  
Kirkland, Washington  
15 July 2018

Amos 7:12-15  
Psalm 85  
Ephesians 1:3-14  
(See Ephesians 1:17-18) Mark 6:7-13

### *Divine Providence*

“In the designs of [Divine] Providence, there are no mere coincidences.”<sup>1</sup> With those words, Pope John Paul II taught us how important it is to have faith. How important it is to have eyes of faith, to better *see* God’s active presence and involvement in the events of our lives.<sup>2</sup> To help us recognize that there’s *nothing* we do on our own, and there is nothing for us to fear.<sup>3</sup> That God provides everything we need.<sup>4</sup>

When we get better at recognizing and cooperating with God’s Providence, we are better prepared for being sent out into the world as Christian disciples. This is the lesson Jesus taught the Apostles when He sent them out two by two. And He continues to teach all of us this lesson as Christian disciples sent out to witness God’s Love to the world.

The Apostles had been learning from Jesus about preaching, praying, and healing, and if they had any doubt about their readiness for their mission, Jesus made things even more uncomfortable for them by sending them out with nothing.<sup>5</sup> By taking nothing with them, Jesus taught them that the only thing they really needed to take with them was faith in *God’s Providence*.<sup>6</sup> That no matter how well prepared we are for anything we do in life, we can do nothing without God’s Providence.

+++

Three years ago, I was a seminarian for the summer at a parish in Tacoma. On a Monday evening, the day after this very same Gospel was read at the Sunday Mass, I was in the parish

office alone after hours. I was supposed to already have been on the road to get to a Mass in Renton, but had decided to stay a few minutes longer to finish up a project.

When the parish office doorbell rang, I thought, “Uh oh, this is gonna make me late.” I opened the door and saw two young men, asking if they could meet the pastor. “The pastor’s not here,” I said to them. “Is there anything I can help you with?”

Just as I was beginning to regret that I hadn’t kept to my schedule and left for Renton five minutes ago, I became intrigued by their story. They explained that they were part of a lay Catholic movement, and that this week, over 1,500 of them had been sent out two by two to cities all across the country to evangelize for one week.

Like the Apostles sent out by Jesus, they had taken (almost) nothing with them for the journey. No food, no money, no phone, no change of clothes, no toothbrush, no toiletries – just a small backpack to carry their Bible, their Book of Prayer, their jacket, and their plane ticket home.

I said to them, “Guys, I’m late for Mass at another church. Why don’t you come with me, then I’ll take you to dinner and you can tell me more.” After Mass and dinner, I wished them well on their journey through Tacoma, and told them to come back if they needed anything while they were in town. I was worried about them being alone in a city they were unfamiliar with, but they weren’t worried – they had fully embraced their mission to go out with nothing. Nothing but faith in God’s Providence.

+++

I didn’t think I’d ever see them again, but I was wrong. On Thursday, I was headed to a dinner event, but I didn’t know Tacoma very well, and I ended up going to the wrong church. As I pulled up to the church and realized it was the wrong place, I recognized two young guys at the

door of that church. I said to them, “Guys, good to see you again! I hope your week in Tacoma is going well! I’m late for dinner at another church. Why don’t you come with me, then you can tell me more about your week.”

So, once again, they came with me. They told me about all their experiences in Tacoma that week, all the people they had met, and all the ways the Lord had been providing for them. After dinner, I said farewell to them for the final time, and they continued on the last couple days of their journey through Tacoma.

+++

Was it a lucky coincidence that I decided to stay a few minutes late at the parish office on that Monday evening? Was it a dumb accident that I went to the wrong church on that Thursday evening? Or was it God’s Providence that had carefully orchestrated our paths to cross those two times? Both times God provided them with at least a dinner. More importantly, they were evidence to them and to me of God’s Providence.

+++

I’ve never been sent out on a journey like those two men before, completely open to God’s Providence. But a one-night version of something like it happened to me unexpectedly back in March 2010. I had been in Haiti for a week with a parish group from Alabama visiting their sister parish, just a couple months after the devastating earthquake.<sup>7</sup>

For our return trip to the United States, the rest of the group was going back to Alabama, on a flight to Miami; whereas I was going back to my seminary in Washington, DC, on a flight to New York. In those months after the earthquake, the airport was a chaotic scene, still not fully recovered from the damage of the earthquake. There was a reduced number of flights arriving and departing at that time, plus uncertainty about the reliability of those flights.

We checked in at the airport about four hours early. My friends' flight to Miami was scheduled to depart before my flight to New York. As we waited in the terminal, rumors started going around the airport that the flight to New York was going to be canceled. I started to worry. Everyone else in my group was going to be departing soon on the flight to Miami. What if my flight was canceled? What would I do all alone in Haiti? How would I tell people in the United States where I was? As I said goodbye to my friends, I felt alone and anxious about the situation I was in.

+++

When the time came for our flight, an announcement was made at the airport. First in Creole – followed by gasps from the people who spoke Creole. Then in French – followed by gasps from the people who spoke French. When the announcement was finally made in English, we already knew what it was going to say: “The flight to New York has been canceled. Please come back tomorrow. We will keep your bags overnight.”

In that moment, when the thing I was most fearing happened, instead of panicking, I suddenly felt a great calm and peace come over me. And I remember saying, “OK, God, let's see what You've got planned.” As people started clamoring to the ticket desk, futilely looking for other flight options, I felt the grace of feeling that everything was going to be OK. And I was even surprised that I was kind of looking forward to seeing what would happen.

The next moment, I saw a young man about my age standing nearby. We both looked at each other, made eye contact, and said, “Do you wanna stick together?” We agreed, and then the Holy Spirit started to put things into motion. Next, we met a woman at the airport from a Christian ministry located there in Port-au-Prince. She called her husband and he came and picked us up. He took us back to their compound for dinner and to stay the night, where we met

about thirty other young people there on mission. It was a beautiful and unexpected way to end my trip to Haiti.

+++

Was it a lucky coincidence that I was standing right next to that guy when the flight was canceled? Was it just an accident that we met the woman who called her husband to come pick us up at the airport? Or was it God's Providence that carefully placed all of us in those spots and gave us the inspiration to speak to one another?

I could go on and on about the countless Providential things that happened that night in Haiti. I could go on and on about the countless Providential things that happened that week in Haiti. Those two young men could go on and on about the countless Providential things that happened to them that week in Tacoma. (But since it's pretty hot in here, and I'm wearing five layers of material, I'll be merciful and bring this homily to a close.)

+++

When we think about the Apostles being sent out on mission, yes, their mission was for others: to preach the Good News of repentance; to drive out demons; and to cure the sick.<sup>8</sup> But by sending them out with nothing, the Lord was blessing *the Apostles*. Giving *them* the experience of God's Loving Providence.

What kind of stories did they share with Jesus and one another when they came back from their mission?<sup>9</sup> What kind of "coincidences" did they experience? In any way that they felt completely unprepared as they went out on mission, when they came back, they must have felt that – with God's Providence working for them – they were prepared for anything.

+++

This is what God wants for all of us to feel. This is the kind of trust – the kind of faith – that God wants all of us to have in Him. We can only receive and strengthen this gift of faith by letting Jesus send us out into the world. Letting Him show us His Divine Providence in action.

Now that we've been through our Parish Rerouting Mission. Now that we've been praying for over a year for the Holy Spirit "to help each of us take our next step in following Jesus."<sup>10</sup> What is the next step that Jesus is inviting you to take? If you're looking for ideas – come talk to me. Take a look in the bulletin – there are many opportunities there, including an important message from New Bethlehem Project, which is currently in great need of meals and volunteers this summer. I ask you to please help there, if you can.

+++

My brothers and sisters, "in the designs of [Divine] Providence, there are no mere coincidences." Let Jesus send you out on mission so that He can prove it to you!

---

<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II, at Fatima, 13 May 1982

<sup>2</sup> See Ephesians 1:18

See John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio: On the Relationship between Faith and Reason* 16 (14 September 1998)

"Thus the world and the events of history cannot be understood in depth without professing faith in the God who is at work in them. Faith sharpens the inner eye, opening the mind to discover in the flux of events the workings of Providence. Here the words of the Book of Proverbs are pertinent: 'The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps' (16:9). This is to say that with the light of reason human beings can know which path to take, but they can follow that path to its end, quickly and unhindered, only if with a rightly tuned spirit they search for it within the horizon of faith. Therefore, reason and faith cannot be separated without diminishing the capacity of men and women to know themselves, the world and God in an appropriate way."

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 10:29-31

<sup>4</sup> See Ephesians 1:3

<sup>5</sup> Mark 3:13-19 and Mark 6:7-9

Also see: Father Robert Barron (2012)

<sup>6</sup> See Father Robert Barron, "The Twelve and the New Israel" from Homily for the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (15 July 2012): "...Jesus here is bringing His disciples through a kind of initiation ritual...[to] get them into an attitude of reliance on God's Providence."

<sup>7</sup> 2010 Haiti Earthquake: 12 January 2010, 7.0 M<sub>w</sub>

<sup>8</sup> Mark 6:12-13

<sup>9</sup> Mark 6:30

<sup>10</sup> *Holy Family Parish Prayer* (found at [www.hfkparish.com](http://www.hfkparish.com))