

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**
**HOLY MASS FOR THE PATRONAL FEAST OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL
(FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME)**
OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL CHURCH – ASTORIA, NEW YORK
JULY 13, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I am happy to be here. I am becoming accustomed to visiting you here at your parish. Perhaps Msgr. Pham will let me become one of his assistant priests!

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The readings today are about being *chosen, called, and sent by God.* Specifically, we see the call of the prophet Amos in the first reading, and Jesus sending out the Twelve Apostles in the Gospel. But as St. Paul makes clear in the second reading, a vocation is not something for just a few people. We are *all* chosen, called, and sent by God to be part of his mission in the world. That is what it means to be Christian.

The first aspect is that we are *chosen*. We begin here because the idea of being personally chosen by God ought to give us a deep sense of comfort, while making us confident about our identity: *who* we are, and *whose* we are. The fact is that each of us was singularly chosen by God. He chose us out of love. And this means that our identity is good. Our relationship with God is not something that we earned. We didn't have to work for it. We didn't have to achieve anything in order to qualify for God's love. Paul says that God chose us in Christ "before the foundation of the world".¹ As adopted children of God, we should always remember what our origin is. God chose us, freely, and lovingly; and he will never change that choice. We are his. This is a solid foundation.

The second aspect is that we are *called*. When we live in the awareness that we have been chosen by God, then we have ears that are open to his Word. We are always "listening" for his voice. What is his will? What does he want us to do?

¹ *Ephesians* 1:4.

What is his plan for our life? Amos had ears that were open to God, and so he heard the call of God – even though his call was surprising. God called Amos to deliver a message of divine judgment to kings, priests, and leaders. And yet, who was Amos? Merely a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. Who would think that a man who came from such a humble and “domestic” line of work should come to pronounce strong judgment against powerful men? Clearly, a true *call* is God’s initiative. This was also true with the Twelve Apostles. Which of the Apostles could have claimed to be worthy to be part of the foundation of the New Covenant? Fishermen? A tax collector? But Jesus, who had chosen them in communion with the Father, called them.

The third aspect is that we are *sent*. God, who chooses and calls us to himself, never keeps us for himself alone. We are called to be missionaries: emissaries of the Good News. Even if this looks different for different people, there is no such thing as a Christian who does not evangelize. For Amos, being sent by God meant leaving the flock and going to prophesy to Israel. From tending for his own, he went to speak to others. His word was not a word of comfort, because he spoke repentance to a people who had rejected God with their actions. He was expelled by men who were unwilling to listen to a message of conversion. But because Amos knew that it was God who had chosen him, called him, and sent him, he was able to find security in God, even when powerful men opposed him. The Apostles were also sent beyond their zone of comfort to preach repentance, drive out demons, and heal the sick. Jesus even enforced poverty on them so that they would depend only on God and upon the hospitality of those who welcomed the Word of God.

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As it was for Amos and for the Twelve Apostles, so it is for us. God has *chosen* us. God *calls* us. And God *sends* us on mission to others. If we remain rooted in our identity as God’s beloved, and remember that our calling and mission are the initiative of God, then no challenge or obstacle will be too great. God does not erase our personal history, our bond of connection to family and home, our particular gifts and skills. But he asks us to place our personal gifts at the service of the mission of salvation. And when we trust in God, then we “know what is the hope

that belongs to our call”.² We know that God, who has initiated this work in us, will bring great things from it.

And for extra encouragement, we have the beautiful example of Mary, our Mother. Mary was chosen by God, called to become the Mother of Jesus, and sent to proclaim the good news of salvation. She is the Lord’s first disciple, and she is also the Star of the New Evangelization. Because she remained rooted in her identity and mission which were from God, she was effective in manifesting Christ to the world. We also know of the power that Mary brings to our own lives, because all of us who have drawn close to her have experienced her spiritual protection and her healing.

May we be inspired by the example of the prophet Amos and the Twelve Apostles. And may Mary – who was also chosen, called, and sent by God – help us to follow her way.

² *Ephesians* 1:18.