

Preaching at Mass while celebrating First Profession of Vows  
15<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary time

Readings: Amos 7:12-15; Psalms 85:9-14; Ephesians 1:3-10; Mark 6:7-13  
<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/071215.cfm>

**Author's note:** If you are reading this online, I invite you to read the Mass readings online first, and then read my preaching.

**Preaching:**

Just imagine Amos. Here he is; he just shared three of his visions and *that pretty much put him in trouble.*

Especially, when he said that *it was God who told him to go prophesy...*

Through Baptism, *all Christians are called and sent to share the love and Word of God.* But when it comes to someone being inspired to share Jesus' mission *as a religious*, well, that's definitely a *discussion-starter* nowadays...

Living out my vocation has not put me in trouble... (*yet.*) However, I did have several deep conversations over these last few years responding to questions about why I would give up so many things to become a religious sister when I could share the love and Word of God as an associate or as a wife and mother.

I can attest to what Amos said, *it's not something we set our mind to. It all comes from the heart, and I do believe it is a call coming from God.*

In the letter to the Ephesians, we hear that "God has made known to us the mysterious purpose set forth in Christ..." *The mystery of our personality and life is something we don't just know; it is something that we get to know*

- through daily happenings,
- through deepening our relationship with God, through prayers,
- through living in community of family,
- and by responding to the movement of the Spirit with faith.

*Formation in the Dominican tradition is not the molding of passive matter to produce a "standard" Dominican.*

Formation, in my experience, has been an *accompaniment* of me as I *responded to the trifold call:*

- the call that I received in my heart and feels like a burning desire,
- the demands of the mission,
- and the invitation and welcoming of my community.

During my formation years, I embraced the many opportunities that

- helped me deepen my relationship with God,
- helped me gain a deeper sense about Dominican life, prayer, family, etc.
- and I gained more knowledge about vowed religious life,
- meanwhile, I was helped to develop better self-awareness.

*I felt that everything came alive in me.*

*I found passion for God and I felt filled with zeal, a burning desire, to praise, to bless, and to preach. I became grateful to God for God's immense love; I wished to offer my life to God in thanksgiving. I had come to accept my call to vowed life more fully.*

In a few minutes I will be asked: *"What do you seek?"*

*I invite you quietly to reflect for a second when you received the call to be a vowed member, or associate, or the call for sharing God's love in family. Imagine Jesus asking you again, what do you seek?*

We all have our own stories and reasons, why we came to this Order. I have come to the Order with a hunger in my heart, because

- I have received a very powerful emotion and great joy of God's immense love that I wished to nurture and then share it with everyone, especially with those who are in need,
- and community could help me see the needs,
- and then with one common voice we can do something about it.

Dominicans at the beginning sounded very close to my personality:

- it is a life rooted in prayer,
  - we study the Word of God and the needs of our time,
  - we study for the purpose of ministry,
  - and then we share the fruits of what is studied and contemplated,
  - it is very mission-driven,
  - and I felt a sense of community instead of just talking about community.
- All these are the very things that made me stay.

In the Gospel we hear,

*"If they don't welcome you, shake the dust off your sandals and leave."*

Hm.....ok, I'm out of here.... Just kidding.... I feel very alive responding to the call for Jesus's mission as a Dominican. So, *what else made me stay here?*

*Religious life feels to me like extraordinary fuel for everyday life*

- that comes from *prayer, Eucharist, relationship with God,*
- that comes from the *witness* of our sisters and brothers,
- that is *mission-driven* and we respond to the needs of our time with one common voice,
- the *welcoming community*: I felt truly welcomed in many aspects, including when we created a new community when I moved into our new house community, we pray and play together, very mutual, loving, supportive and life-giving environment;
- the sense of belonging to our wonderful *greater Dominican family* with associates, brothers and sisters of other congregations;
- *preaching* ; I love preaching. I discovered I have a fire in my belly to preach the Good News, and this is one of the Dominican charisms
- *assembly gatherings*: when we come together and reflect on what goals we had for the year, what we did about them and then brainstorming and setting goals for the upcoming year;
- *study*: as I said earlier: studying the Word of God and the needs of our time, studying for the purpose of ministry, and I had a great experience studying vowed religious life in a flexible way (panel discussions, study groups, personal study when I read more about preaching or Dominican life etc.)
- *itinerancy* that comes from being mission driven: going where the need is
- and Dominicans are not afraid to *take risks* to carry out Jesus' mission

In today's Gospel, *Jesus' instructions to the apostles are very specific:*

- they are sent to preach and to share his authority to heal
- Jesus sends them two by two, establishing his mission as a communal endeavor.
- Jesus also instructs them to travel lightly, without the customary food, money, and extra set of clothes.
- "If they don't welcome you, then shake the dust off your sandals and leave."

First, I thought that *those apostles were actually pretty lucky. They only had these 4 guidelines.* Today, as I am standing here, *I am going to profess*

- a life that is in the light of the Gospel,
- a life that is lived according to the Rule of St. Augustine
- and the Constitutions of this Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of Peace.

*"Take nothing on the journey..."*

Last year, during canonical year of novitiate, we went to New Orleans to help St. Bernard's Project, which is an organization to rebuild New Orleans after Katrina. Before we left for the trip, a Jesuit priest preached at Mass how their novices were being sent off to their three-week long journey with only \$5 and one Megabus ticket. Knowing that we (Dominican novices) received a bit more for our trip to New Orleans, when I heard him saying this, I just had to look at our novice directors. Luckily, both just looked at the priest as he continued his homily. "Good" - I thought, "they didn't stare at us." But sure enough, at home one of the directors asked us: what we thought about the homily. I quickly blurted out: "I am not a Jesuit."

But on a serious note,

One might wonder, why would I profess the vows of obedience, celibacy and poverty in our time, when

- we have more and more rights and freedom,
- we live in a consumer-society,
- and the standard seems like having a family on your own.

Taking the vows no longer feels like part of a package of religious life.

*I feel that the vows help me to be open to God and they help me to be available to the needs of others and the needs of our times.*

While it seems that religious people give a lot, we do gain a lot.

*First of all, we are not alone.*

Jesus doesn't expect us to do this job alone:

*Jesus seemed to know the value of teamwork.* Like the first disciples, we are not sent alone. Through our baptismal call, as Jesus' disciples today, we are a community of the Church, and together (be it single, married, associate, religious) we are sent to share Jesus' mission with others.

*Community*

- helps strengthen our life of discipleship,
- in community, we can contemplate together how we respond to the needs of our time,
- once we received the call, be it marriage, single life, priesthood or religious life, we are expected to live out the call in fidelity.

And now I invite you to ponder God saying to us:

*"Go, my dear child, and share the good news:  
share my love in everything you do.  
Go, prophesy."*

Preaching submitted by Sr. Bea, who took her First Profession of Vows on July 11, 2015.