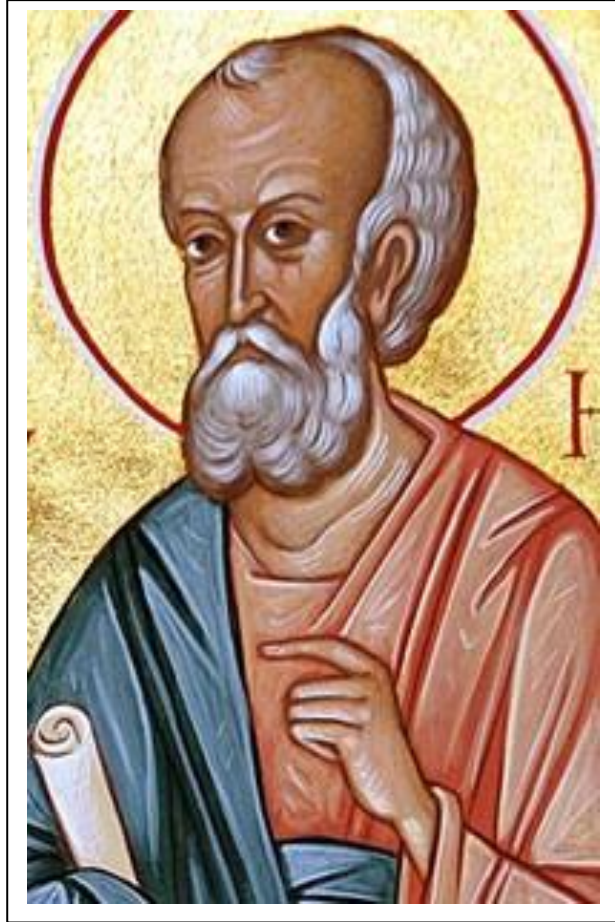


# Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

## Monday

### 29<sup>th</sup> June



#### First Reading

#### They trample on the heads of ordinary people

Amos 2; 6-10, 13-16

The Lord says this:  
For the three crimes, the four crimes of Israel  
I have made my decree and will not relent:  
Because they have sold the virtuous man for silver  
And the poor man for a pair of sandals,  
Because they trample on the heads of ordinary people  
And push the poor out of their path,  
Because father and son have both resorted to the same girl,  
Profaning my holy name,  
Because they stretch themselves out by the side of every altar  
On clothes acquired as pledges,  
And drink the wine of the people they have fined  
In the house of their God...  
Yet it was I who overthrew the Amorites when they attacked,  
Men tall as cedars and strong as oaks,  
I will destroy them,  
Both fruit above ground

And root below.  
It was I who brought you out of the land of Egypt  
And for forty years led you through the wilderness  
To take possession of the Amorite's country.  
See then how I am going to crush you into the ground  
as the threshing-sledge crushes when clogged with straw;  
flight will not save even the swift,  
the strong man will find his strength useless,  
the mighty man will be powerless to save himself.  
The Bowman will not stand his ground,  
The fast runner will not escape,  
The horseman will not save himself,  
The bravest warriors will run away naked that day.  
It is the Lord who speaks

### **Responsorial Psalm**

**Ps 49; 16-23**

#### **Alleluia**

Alleluia, Alleluia  
I am the light of the world, says the Lord,  
Anyone who follows me  
Will have the light of life  
Alleluia

### **Gospel**

**Matthew 8; 18 - 22**

#### **Follow me**

When Jesus saw the great crowds all about him he gave orders to leave for the other side. One of the scribes then came up and said: "Master I will follow you wherever you go". Jesus replied: "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head". Another man, one of the disciples, said to him: "Sir, let me go and bury my father first". But Jesus replied: "Follow me and leave the dead to bury their dead."

### **Fr Tim's Reflection**

This week the first readings are taken from the prophet Amos. He was a prophet, from Judah (the southern Kingdom centred on Jerusalem), but who was prophesying in Israel (the northern Kingdom). This fact alone would have contributed to his words being unwelcome! This period in history was one of relative peace. Assyria was not yet a threat. Also the kingdom enjoyed relative prosperity, but with increased wealth came the danger of straying from the path of Yahweh.

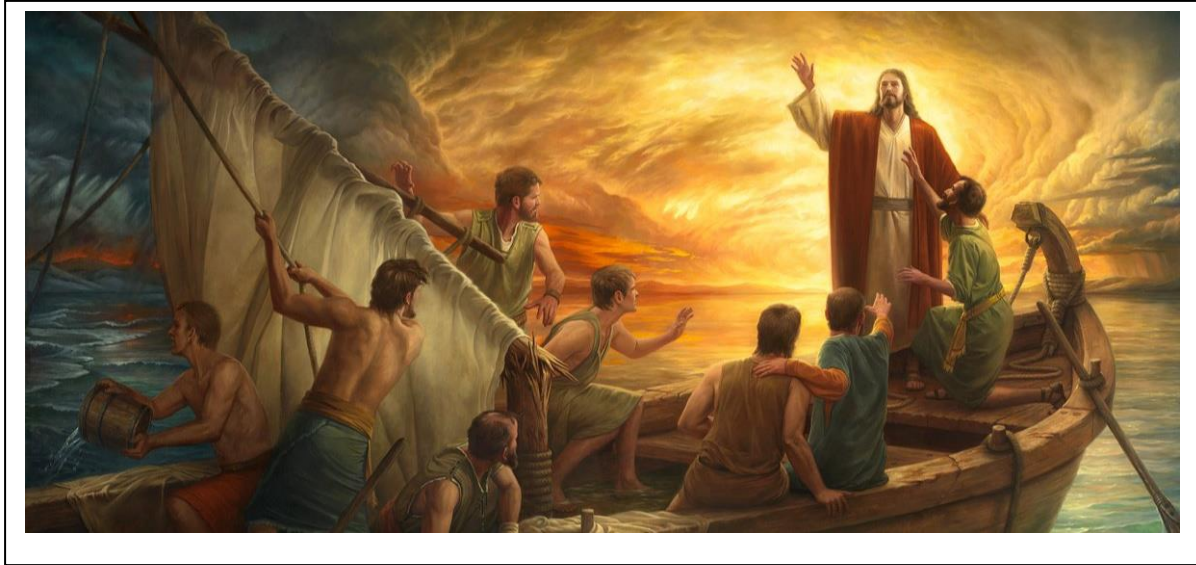
Amos' main concern was the way in which the poor of his day were being treated. Those who were getting rich were doing so by trampling over the rights of the less well off in society. It seems that comfort has made the well to do class forget their origins and forget who it was that brought them out of Egypt and gave them the land they are currently living in. Actions have consequences, and these Amos points out to the people, who are reluctant to listen to his message.

Both Ghandi and Mandela drew on Amos when they stated that a nation should be judged by the way in which they treated the poor. In our current situation we can ask how Amos would view the way in which those on the margins of our own society have been treated during this pandemic.

The Gospel speaks of the urgency of the apostolic calling. To our ears it might seem cruel that a would be disciple was not allowed to bury his own father before setting out to follow Jesus. However, there are times when we need to evaluate our priorities and situate our desire to be a friend of Jesus amongst other desires that sometimes compete with this.

# Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

## Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June



### First reading

Amos 3:1-8,4:11-12

#### **It is for all your sins that I mean to punish you**

Listen, sons of Israel, to this oracle the Lord speaks against you, against the whole family I brought out of the land of Egypt:

You alone, of all the families of earth, have I acknowledged, therefore it is for all your sins that I mean to punish you.

Do two men take the road together  
if they have not planned to do so?

Does the lion roar in the jungle  
if no prey has been found?

Does the young lion growl in his lair  
if he has captured nothing?

Does the bird fall to the ground  
if no trap has been set?

Does the snare spring up from the ground  
if nothing has been caught?

Does the trumpet sound in the city  
without the populace becoming alarmed?

Does misfortune come to a city  
if the Lord has not sent it?

No more does the Lord do anything  
without revealing his plans to his servants the prophets.

The lion roars: who can help feeling afraid?

The Lord speaks: who can refuse to prophesy?

I overthrew you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,  
and you were like a brand snatched from the blaze;  
and yet you never came back to me.

It is the Lord who speaks.

This therefore, Israel, is what I plan to do to you,  
and because I am going to do this to you,  
Israel, prepare to meet your God!

## Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 5:5-8

## Gospel Acclamation

Ps147:12,15

Alleluia, alleluia!

O praise the Lord, Jerusalem!

He sends out his word to the earth.

Alleluia!

## Gospel

Matthew 8:23-27

### Jesus rebuked the winds and the seas, and all was calm

Jesus got into the boat followed by his disciples. Without warning a storm broke over the lake, so violent that the waves were breaking right over the boat. But he was asleep. So they went to him and woke him saying, 'Save us, Lord, we are going down!' And he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened, you men of little faith?' And with that he stood up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and all was calm again. The men were astounded and said, 'Whatever kind of man is this? Even the winds and the sea obey him.'

## Fr Tim's reflection

The image of Jesus asleep on a cushion in the boat in the middle of the storm is a striking one. Perhaps this is how we perceive Jesus when we are trying to get through to him in our prayer. Where is he? What is he doing?

Storms have a habit of coming upon us unexpectedly. In Mark's version of this story the question of the disciples to Jesus as they wake him up is even more telling: "Master, do you not care that we are going down". Matthew is more direct: "Lord, we are going down!"

Of course Jesus cares. Every moment of our lives are precious to him. But it not simply the external storm that has to be quelled. Jesus has to dispel the fear inside of the disciples that is clouding their judgement. Not only are the waves of the sea stilled, but also the anxiety level of those in the boat. It is worth calling to mind this story when we are feeling anxious and afraid.

In a rather philosophical passage from Amos, the prophet explains with striking images from everyday life the principle of cause and effect. When we hear the lion roar we know he has found his pray. The roar is to make sure that we know and to make us realise that we should be afraid. It is almost opposite to what Jesus is teaching the disciples. He tells them they need not be afraid, because God cares for them. Amos is saying that the people ought to be afraid, because their current behaviour is only provoking the Lord. The day of reckoning is coming.

It is true that the Lord came to bring peace to those who are troubled, but also to trouble those who are too peaceful. In a couple of chapters time we shall here Matthew report the word of Jesus: "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." Indeed, the first followers of Jesus lived through some very troubling times, yet they did so with an inner calm; a deep sense of personal conviction that led to their security. We can pray for a similar inner serenity as we face the trials of our own day.

# Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

## Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July



### First reading

Amos 5:14-15,21-24

#### Seek good and not evil so that you may live

Seek good and not evil  
so that you may live,  
and that the Lord, God of Hosts, may really be with you  
as you claim he is.  
Hate evil, love good,  
maintain justice at the city gate,  
and it may be that the Lord, God of Hosts, will take pity  
on the remnant of Joseph.  
I hate and despise your feasts,  
I take no pleasure in your solemn festivals.  
When you offer me holocausts,  
I reject your oblations,  
and refuse to look at your sacrifices of fattened cattle.  
Let me have no more of the din of your chanting,  
no more of your strumming on harps.  
But let justice flow like water,  
and integrity like an unfailing stream.

### Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 49(50):7-13,16-17

## **Gospel Acclamation**

**Jn14:6**

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, says the Lord;

No one can come to the Father except through me.

Alleluia!

## **Gospel**

**Matthew 8:28-34**

### **The Gadarene swine**

When Jesus reached the country of the Gadarenes on the other side of the lake, two demoniacs came towards him out of the tombs – creatures so fierce that no one could pass that way. They stood there shouting, ‘What do you want with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before the time?’ Now some distance away there was a large herd of pigs feeding, and the devils pleaded with Jesus, ‘If you cast us out, send us into the herd of pigs.’ And he said to them, ‘Go then’, and they came out and made for the pigs; and at that the whole herd charged down the cliff into the lake and perished in the water. The swineherds ran off and made for the town, where they told the whole story, including what had happened to the demoniacs. At this the whole town set out to meet Jesus; and as soon as they saw him they implored him to leave the neighbourhood.

### **Fr Tim’s Reflection**

The people most upset by the actions of Jesus in the gospel of today must have been the swineherds. With their pigs drowned, they have lost their livelihood. Of course, for the Jewish people, pigs were unclean animals. A Jew would not eat any part of the animal. Thus we must conclude that the pig farmers are not Jews, and neither are they raising their herd for the local market.

In the story we can understand a little bit more about peace and trouble. Jesus has already calmed the storm and calmed the fears that had arisen in the hearts of his followers. Now he ministers to a couple of men who are demented. Mark includes many more details of the malady that afflicted these unfortunate men. They are naked, they lived in the tombs, they would howl at night, they would gash themselves and there was no way in which they could be restrained. Of course Jesus has to minister to them.

Again, it is Mark who names the evil spirits: “My name is legion because there are many of us”. After the spirits have departed and the pigs are drowned, the two men are found clothed and in their right minds. The local inhabitants implored Jesus to leave, not simply because he had ruined a local thriving industry, but also because their peace has been disturbed. They are the ones who are now afraid.

While the demoniacs were howling in the hills at night, the local people felt secure in their town. Their common distain for them united them in a common hate. Once Jesus had removed this source of unity, they felt threatened and exposed. Jesus had undermined their social cohesion. If there were to remain united, they would have to find something positive that they could hold in common, rather than a common hatred. This frightened them.

Amos, in the first reading, is reminding the people of the actions that please God. They think that in celebrating feasts and festivals they can keep God on their side. If we want to please God, we need much more than external show. A reform of the heart will please God much more than a celebration which we hold to praise his name. Amos concludes: “Let Justice flow like a river and Integrity as an unfailing stream”.

# Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

## Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July



### First reading

Amos 7:10-17

#### The Lord took me from herding the flock and sent me to prophesy

Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent word to Jeroboam king of Israel as follows. ‘Amos is plotting against you in the heart of the House of Israel; the country can no longer tolerate what he keeps saying. For this is what he says, “Jeroboam is going to die by the sword, and Israel go into exile far from its country.”’ To Amos, Amaziah said, ‘Go away, seer;’ get back to the land of Judah; earn your bread there, do your prophesying there. We want no more prophesying in Bethel; this is the royal sanctuary, the national temple.’ ‘I was no prophet, neither did I belong to any of the brotherhoods of prophets,’ Amos replied to Amaziah ‘I was a shepherd, and looked after sycamores: but it was the Lord who took me from herding the flock, and the Lord who said, “Go, prophesy to my people Israel.” So listen to the word of the Lord.

‘You say:

“Do not prophesy against Israel,  
utter no oracles against the House of Isaac.”

‘Very well, this is what the Lord says,  
“Your wife will be forced to go on the streets,  
your sons and daughters will fall by the sword,  
your land be parcelled out by measuring line,  
and you yourself die on unclean soil  
and Israel will go into exile far distant from its own land.”’

### Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 18(19):8-11

Mt11:25

## **Gospel Acclamation**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Blessed are you, Father,  
Lord of heaven and earth,  
for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom  
to mere children.  
Alleluia!

## **Gospel**

**Matthew 9:1-8**

### **'Your sins are forgiven; get up and walk'**

Jesus got in the boat, crossed the water and came to his own town. Then some people appeared, bringing him a paralytic stretched out on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'Courage, my child, your sins are forgiven.' And at this some scribes said to themselves, 'This man is blaspheming.' Knowing what was in their minds Jesus said, 'Why do you have such wicked thoughts in your hearts? Now, which of these is easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"? But to prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' – he said to the paralytic – 'get up, and pick up your bed and go off home.' And the man got up and went home. A feeling of awe came over the crowd when they saw this, and they praised God for giving such power to men.

## **Fr Tim's Reflection**

When Israel was one kingdom, the temple in Jerusalem was where everyone went to worship. After the death of Solomon the kingdom was divided. Israel, the northern kingdom set up a rival to Jerusalem at Bethel (literally "house of *the one*") and it was there that people of the northern kingdom would go to offer sacrifices to God and celebrate the religious festivals.

The prophet Amos, who was from the south, was critical of the need for two centres of worship. Naturally, this did not go down to well with the priests of Bethel and they complained to Jeroboam the king. Amos was told to go and do his prophesying elsewhere. Because of their unreceptiveness to the word of the Lord, Amos pronounces judgement on the king and the royal family.

As an aside we receive an interesting take on who Amos perceives himself to be. Like David, originally he was a shepherd, but he was also a forester, looking after sycamores. Yet the Lord called him from this lucrative employment to be a prophet and stand up for the poor of society. Instead of trees and sheep, he was called upon to look after God's people.

In the gospel today Matthew changes the story of the cure of the paralytic from the origin which he found in Mark. In Mark, the man is brought to Jesus by four friends, who, not finding an easy way of getting the man to Jesus, remove the roof of the house and lower him down on ropes. All of this is omitted by Matthew. However, the essentials of the story are the same. The man's sins are forgiven, the onlookers doubt Jesus' power to do this, the man is instructed to pick up his mat and walk. The whole story is about overcoming all that holds us back: both physical paralysis and inaction caused by fear and sin. At least in Matthews version, the house owners roof remains intact.

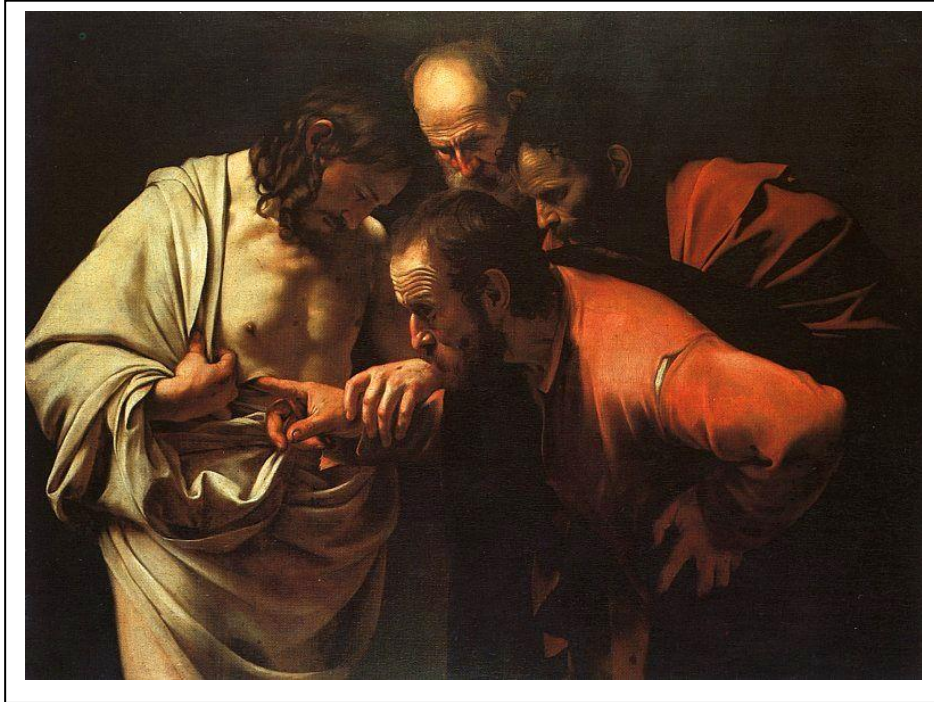
Both readings encourage us to leave our personal comfort zones. As Jesus noted, the poor are with us always, and they always need us to help to empower them. We can ask how we are being called to help them to claim what is their right. Sin can become so habitual that we can actually feel comfortable in our sinfulness. We need the ministry of Jesus to wake us from our torpor and to get moving again. Let us be inspired by the word we hear.



# Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

## Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July

### Feast of St Thomas, Apostle



#### First reading

**Ephesians 2:19-22**

**In Christ you are no longer aliens, but citizens like us**

You are no longer aliens or foreign visitors: you are citizens like all the saints, and part of God's household. You are part of a building that has the apostles and prophets for its foundations, and Christ Jesus himself for its main cornerstone. As every structure is aligned on him, all grow into one holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built into a house where God lives, in the Spirit.

#### Responsorial Psalm

**Psalm 116(117):1-2**

#### Gospel Acclamation

**Jn20:29**

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus said: 'You believe because you can see me.  
Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'  
Alleluia!

#### Gospel

**John 20:24-29**

**'My Lord and my God!'**

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, 'We have seen the Lord', he answered, 'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can

put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.’ Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. ‘Peace be with you’ he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.’ Thomas replied, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him: ‘You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.’

### **Fr Tim’s Reflection**

Today we celebrate the feast of the apostle Thomas. So in our readings we have a break from the daily cycle. Instead we listen to reading more appropriate to the feast we celebrate.

St Ignatius sent St Francis Xavier, at the request of the king of Portugal, to evangelise “the East” in 1540. Goa was then a Portuguese possession. When Xavier arrived in India he discovered a group of people who called themselves “Christians” and who claimed to have been evangelised by St Thomas. This branch of the church had been forgotten for 1500 years. Fortunately Xavier was able to respect their ancient traditions, he encouraged them, but turned his attention to others who had never heard of Jesus Christ.

If Thomas did arrive in India to spread the news of the resurrection, he was certainly the apostle to travel the furthest distance. Instead of calling him “doubting Thomas” maybe we need to call him “enterprising Thomas”. Thomas was able to see and touch the risen Lord, but he was then able to inspire others to believe, even though they had not received the gift of a personal encounter.

Tomorrow (Saturday) St Peter’s will be open for private prayer in the afternoon for the first time in three months. We can come in and pray before the Blessed Sacrament. Like Thomas we can acknowledge our faith by the words: “My Lord and My God”.

From the following week we are able to come to Mass. These are all positive steps. Sadly we will not be able to use the chapel in St Joseph’s for a while, at least until the need for rigorous social distancing has passed. However, we are taking steps forward, albeit with prudent caution.

So it is up to each one of us to weigh up and judge what is appropriate for us. Maybe we choose to stay home a while longer. Perhaps we choose to come to a weekday Mass, rather than a weekend one. We must do all we can to keep ourselves and others safe. I pray that the Spirit will help each one of us come to the right decision.

