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4 Friday

FRIDAY, Week 13 of the Year

Amos 8: 4-6, 9-12  
Ps 118: 2,10,20,30,40,131  
Matt 9: 9 - 13

All this week we've been hearing, in the first readings at Mass, from the book of the prophet Amos. Though he's numbered as among the 12 "minor" prophets, there's nothing 'minor' about his message or the forcefulness with which he preached it. Amos was a sheep-farmer, and when he was called to prophecy in Israel, he brought to his preaching the blunt, rough directness and colourfulness of speech that is often characteristic of countryside people. He only preached for a short while before returning to his rural life, but it was a time of great prosperity and wealth in the kingdom, and of exploitation of the powerless. Amos criticised and condemned the corruption of city life, the social injustices, oppression of the poor and insincere empty religious observances. He warned that the Lord would overturn all these practices, and people would not be able to find and hear God's word.

It's not hard to apply Amos' criticisms to much of our prosperous modern world, where the same kind of injustices and oppressions also exist. Who today is the Lord's prophet, like Amos was? Meanwhile, Christ has come with His message of neighbourly love, care and concern. Shouldn't we all be ashamed that some of God's people still have to suffer those same injustices that Amos criticised nearly 3000 years ago? Where today can people find and hear God's word? Let it not be confined to within our churches and Christian gatherings, or even to within individuals' Christian hearts. We all have a calling to be prophets, speakers of God's word, not only in what we say but in our attitudes, life-styles and behaviour.