

A 15 year old girl named Sarah was having a bad hair day. Sarah screams, "I hate my hair. I should just cut it off and start over." Sarah's mother hears her mournful cry, comes into the room and calmly suggests, "That is a good idea, Sarah. I know some people who would love to have it."

"Are you kidding," responds Sarah. "Who would want to be stuck with a whole head of this stuff?" So mom leaves the room and comes back with a brochure that she hands to Sarah. It's about an organization called *Locks of Love*. *Locks of Love* makes wigs for children who have lost their hair from chemotherapy.

Sarah looks over the brochure and comments, "So this organization would use my hair to help kids with cancer?" Her mom explains, "Yes, and that way your problem becomes someone else's solution."

Sarah sits there very quietly and finally her mom asks, "Are you OK, Sarah?" And Sarah says quietly, "I think I'm having a **maturity moment**."

When you consider the readings today, I think they are all asking us to embrace similar maturity moments, calling us to a fuller life and spiritual maturity. In the gospel we find the disciples who have been listening to Jesus and watching him reach out to others and now it's time for them to get some work experience. It's important that they not take with them any of the things you would expect for a traveler. Jesus didn't want them to be preoccupied with themselves. God would guide them to shelter and food but they were to guide others to the good news and bring personal healing and wholeness wherever possible.

In our first reading the prophet Amos is also **focused beyond himself**. Amos was not a professional prophet; it wasn't his lifelong calling. He didn't wear special clothes and demonstrate his message with symbolic acts. He was just an ordinary guy, he had a regular full time job already, but God tells him that he has to warn people in the northern kingdom of Israel that their lifestyle is leading them into trouble. Since he was coming from the southern kingdom of Judah that wouldn't be easy; the worldly northerners would have considered Amos to be what we might call a "redneck."

The bottom line is that Amos is trying to persuade the government leaders in Israel to take better care of the needy. And they make it clear that he is disliked and unwanted. But Amos didn't operate on opinion polls. The truth wasn't what the majority wanted to hear. The truth was that God expected them to behave in less selfish and self-centered ways and he was determined that they needed to hear that message for their own good - no matter how unpopular that made him.

In our second reading today St Paul is basically reminding us that our overall focus is to become holy and giving persons. Not self-absorbed but looking beyond ourselves at the bigger picture of life – the way Sarah's mom tried to broaden Sarah's view of the world.

So the word of God today is calling us to maturity moments – those experiences when we manage to put aside our own personal needs and problems and desires for the sake of someone else, for the sake of causes or events or truths that are bigger than us.

Maybe instead of shopping at one more store, we visit a friend in the hospital. Maybe instead of repeating an opinion poll as gospel, we actually spread the gospel. Maybe we speak up when someone declares that marriage is obsolete and family is just an unnecessary burden. Maybe we support Pope Francis when he highlights the needs of the oppressed and our responsibility to care for creation – even if it doesn't match the policies of our favorite political party. Maybe we stopped fretting over Obamacare and notice that billions of people in third world countries have no potable water or enough food or any medical care.

Maturity moments are those breakthroughs when we realize that we are not the center of the world but only a part of a much larger world. AND maturity moments are those **holy times** when our disappointment at what life has handed us gets transformed into gratitude simply for the gift of life itself. When instead of going under when things at work aren't going well, we can thank God for life, health and the ability to work in the first place. When instead of fixating on my problem, I reach out to help fix someone else's problem.

We ask God today to open our minds to recognize maturity moments when they come and open our hearts to embrace them rather than let them pass by. We pray that by embracing these moments they may build into a life of maturity characterized by love of God and a genuine care for others.