

## **Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time A2023**

Let me start this homily with the story of liberation from Egypt. By setting the children of Israel free, God displayed the strength of his arms and the power of his mighty deeds. Two motivations guided his intent: First, to make Israel a nation consecrated to him and a kingdom of those who offer him pleasing sacrifices. Second, to give an example to all the nations of the earth so that seeing how he deals with Israel they come to know that is the way he wants to deal with them too.

But, all that was conditioned by Israel hearkening to his voice and keeping the covenant. Unfortunately, Israel did not live up to the expectation and the children of Israel again and again failed in their commitment toward God. Because Israel was chosen as a prototype for all the nations of the earth, his rebellion became our rebellion, his failure our failure and his sins our sins.

That is what led in salvation history to the story of Jesus. As Saint Paul says in the letter to the Galatians, when the times were accomplished, God sent his Son Jesus in the world to save us. By letting his Son die on the cross for our salvation, God proved how much he loves us. That is what St Paul explains in the Letter to the Romans.

For St Paul, God's love is generous and unselfish. The nobility and grandeur of this love is seen in the death of Jesus for our salvation. The argument St Paul develops here is very simple: It would be difficult enough to die for a just person. Perhaps, it can happen that someone may have the courage to die for a good person. But what is extraordinary with Jesus is that he died for us when we were still sinners and in a state of hostility with God.

For that particular reason, our status with God has changed completely. We are now justified by the blood of Christ and reconciled with God. Consequently, our sins will never be able to overpower the love of God. We might abandon God, but he will never abandon us. Thanks to Jesus, we are brought into a right and new relationship with God even when we are still sinners. If so, how grateful should we be to God for what he has done for us in Jesus! How appreciative of God's love should we be!

It is that love that moves the heart of Jesus in today's Gospel at the sight of people's misery. Jesus feels compassion for them, because nobody is taking care of them. Everybody is busy with his own business and interest without asking any question about the fate of the remaining of the people. The people might be hungry, sick, oppressed and abused, but who cares?

Jesus saw the people and their misery as harvest to be reaped and saved. That is the reason why he sent the disciples to go and minister. Wherever the same situation of people's misery is found today, Jesus feels the same compassion and wants us, his disciples, to act and put an end to it.

Here we find one of the challenges of our Christian life. We are called to change the face of the earth, and to bring peace, joy and healing to those in distress. We do not have the right to be indifferent when facing the suffering of our brothers and sisters, whenever and wherever it happens, and to whomever it happens. We do not have the right to say that is not my problem. No; it is your problem because you are Jesus' disciple. Any situation that provokes Jesus' compassion should provoke yours too.

Remember, the harvest will never be done unless there are laborers to work for it. Jesus wants the world to hear the good news of the Gospel and to be saved. But people will never hear it unless others tell them and commit to do it. Our duty as Christians is to become laborers of Christ for our fellow human beings, each according to his vocation. Each one of us must become a laborer in order to bring people to God. For that to happen, we have to pray, but at the same time we have to take concrete actions in order to fulfill this mission.

This is true for the vocation to priesthood as well religious life. We have to pray and ask the Father to send many workers in his field. Why? Because the things of the world are more attractive than the things of God. We have to ask the Father to give courage, strength and the spirit of sacrifice to young men and women of our time to work for him.

The apostles were among those who accepted sacrifice for the sake of God's kingdom. But, who were those apostles that Jesus summoned and commissioned into the world? They were very ordinary people, like you and me. They had nothing special compared to other people. They were ordinary people, but called to do extraordinary things. In fact, Jesus chose these men not for what they were, but for what they would become under his guidance. In the same way, Jesus sees in each one of us not only what we are, but also what he can make of us. Jesus sees in each one of us not only what we are, but also what we can become when we listen to him and do what he recommends us. We should never think that we have nothing to offer Jesus, because he can take what the most ordinary people offer and use it for greatness.

Before finishing, let me recall this recommendation of Jesus that the apostles have to give without cost since they have received without cost. What does this mean? It means that the servant of the Lord must never be overly concerned with material things. But, at the same time, the people of God must never fail in their duty to see that those who serve God receive reasonable support. This passage puts an obligation on the teacher as well as on the people of God.

Now I can finish by paying tribute to these wonderful men who have always given the best of themselves without cost for the good of their loved ones, namely our fathers. As a matter of fact, all of us have become who we are today because our fathers did accept sacrifices for us. May God bless our fathers, living and dead, and fill them with countless blessings. May he give you all his strength so that you keep taking care of your children! May all the sacrifices you endure for your children be rewarded in abundant harvest for your own wellbeing and eternal life! God bless you all!

**Exodus 19: 2-6a; Romans 5: 6-11; Matthew 9: 36-10: 8**



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