

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Today's Gospel presents us with a beautiful revelation of the heart of Jesus. Before Jesus sends His disciples on mission, St. Matthew tells us something very important: "When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Everything begins with compassion.

The Gospel tells us that Jesus "had compassion" for the crowds. The Greek word used by St. Matthew is *splagchnizomai*. It is one of the most beautiful words in the New Testament. This word does not simply mean feeling sorry for someone, it refers to a deep movement from the very depths of one's being. In the ancient world, the inner organs were considered the seat of the deepest emotions. Thus, when the Gospel says that Jesus had compassion, it means that He was moved to His very core: He felt the pain, confusion, and suffering of the people as if it were His own. Jesus did not merely observe the crowds from a distance, He entered into their suffering. He saw that they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd, and their pain touched His heart. This is the compassion of God. God is not distant from human suffering. He is not an indifferent spectator. He is *Emmanuel*, God-with-us. He walks with His people, suffers with them, and comes to save them.

Pope St. John Paul II beautifully expounded in his encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in Mercy), that mercy reveals the very face of God. God's response to human misery is not indifference but compassionate love. The mission of the Church, therefore, is to make that mercy visible in the world.

What is remarkable in today's Gospel is that Jesus' compassion immediately becomes *the mission*. Compassion is not an emotion that remains within Him, it becomes an action; it becomes a healing; it becomes preaching; it becomes a sending forth. Because Jesus has compassion, He acts. Because Jesus has compassion, He sends. Because Jesus has compassion, He commissions His disciples for mission.



The Gospel then introduces a second important theme: authority. Jesus summons the Twelve and gives them authority over unclean spirits, and the power to heal every disease and sickness. Notice the order: First compassion, then authority. Compassion is the source. Mission is the fruit. Authority is the instrument. The authority Jesus gives to His disciples is meant to continue to perpetuity His own compassionate ministry.

Authority in the Gospel is never to dominate, and it is never power for personal gain. It is power placed at the service of love. Today's Gospel lays these two dimensions out clearly. When Jesus commands His disciples to cure the sick, raise the dead, and cleanse the lepers, this is *compassion* responding directly to human suffering; restoring dignity, hope, and life. At the same time, when Jesus sends them to proclaim the Good News and to cast out demons, this is *divine authority* confronting the powers of sin, evil, and darkness. *Compassion* draws the disciples to the people; *authority* enables transformation in them and to their circumstance. Both are necessary. Compassion without authority is mere sympathy. Authority without compassion is harsh and lifeless. Jesus unites both perfectly.

During his pontificate, Pope Francis often described the Church as a “field hospital”, reminding us that the Church must go out to heal wounds, accompany the suffering, and revealing God's tenderness to the world while boldly proclaiming the Gospel. We are not to simply offer human comfort; we are to offer Christ Himself. That is exactly what today's Gospel illustrates. The disciples are sent not merely to make people feel better; they are sent to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to all.

My brothers and sisters, this Gospel is not only relating the mission of the Twelve Apostles to us; it is about us and refers to us, too. At Baptism, each one of us received a share in Christ's mission. Every Christian is called to see as Jesus sees. Do we notice those who are lonely? Do we recognize those who are spiritually lost? Do we see the sick, the elderly, the grieving, the poor, and those who feel abandoned?

The first step of discipleship is to allow our hearts to be touched by the suffering of others. Then, like the Apostles, we are sent forth on mission; perhaps not to raise the dead, but to bring hope to those who are spiritually dead. We may not be able to physically cleanse

lepers, but we can restore dignity to those whom society rejects. We may not be able to cast out demons in an extraordinary way, but we can resist evil, overcome hatred with love, and bear witness to the victory of Christ.

Finally, Jesus instructs His disciples: “You received without payment; give without payment.” Everything we have received from God is a gift: our faith is a gift; our vocation is a gift; our talents are a gift; and God’s mercy is a gift. Therefore, we are called to become generous instruments of that gift to others.

Recently, Pope Leo XIV used a beautiful image from the Soccer World Cup. He said: “Soccer helps us remember something very important: that life is not a race to be run in solitude; it is something played as a team, and we must learn to run together.” He added: “... a player who wants to be a star but never passes the ball will probably lose.”

The same is true in Christian life. Jesus did not send the Apostles individually to carry out the mission alone; He called the twelve and sent them out in pairs. The Church is a team. Every baptized person has a role to play: some proclaim the Gospel through preaching; some through service; others through prayer, charity, encouragement, and sacrifice. The mission succeeds when we work together. Compassion is not meant to remain locked in our hearts; it must flow through the entire community of believers. The harvest is plentiful, and the Lord invites all of us to become labourers in His harvest.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, let us ask the Lord for two graces:

First, for the compassion of Christ so that our hearts may be moved by the needs of others.

Second, the authority of Christ, so that we may courageously proclaim the Gospel and to serve His people.

May our lives become a reflection of Jesus Himself: a heart full of compassion and hands empowered for mission.