

Exodus 19:2-6a

Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5

Romans 5:6-11

Matthew 9:36-10:8

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time June 18, 2023

REFLECTION

This week's Gospel shows Jesus sending the twelve apostles out to do his work, giving them authority to relieve spiritual oppression and heal physical illness. This is not the only time the disciples are sent out in the Gospel accounts; this sending out continues even after Jesus' death and resurrection. During his earthly mission and after his death, Jesus consistently chooses to make his church the vehicle of his love and compassion to the world.

Why does Jesus tell his disciples to begin their ministry in Israel rather than to Samaritans or pagans? We know this isn't an expression of prejudice because Jesus himself goes out of his way to extend his ministry to outsiders (for example, Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 17:11-19; John 4:5-42). By his very nature, Jesus is perfectly faithful to God's covenantal promise to Israel. He brings the message of God fulfilling his promise of salvation to them first, but we see many people reject it. Despite the special place of those Israelites, God also offers salvation to all. All of us who are baptized have entered into a similarly covenantal relationship with Jesus. We can trust in his promises!

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What are some of the things you have been given "without cost"? How can you share those gifts with others?
- ❖ Do you find it easier to minister to strangers than to the people in your own family or community? Why might that be the case?

ACTION

Jesus continues to be moved by compassion to send disciples out into the world. Some are called to be priests, to bring God's mercy to us through the sacraments. We may have been blessed by the service of others who were called to religious life or other formal ministries. But all of us are called to be Christ's hands to bring his love and healing to a wounded world! Begin as the disciples did: Look for ways to pay forward the blessings you've received to those closest to home.

"Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are eyes through which he looks compassion on this world."

—St. Theresa of Avila 



June 18, 2023

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #91A

Exodus 19:2-6a

Psalms 100:1-2, 3, 5

Romans 5:6-11

Matthew 9:36-10:8

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Today's passage marks a shift in the Gospel of Matthew from the ministry of Jesus to the sending forth of the twelve apostles. With loving compassion, Jesus recognizes the deep need for spiritual leadership of the people, and asks his disciples to pray that God will send more help. He calls forth the twelve apostles and gives them the authority to continue his mission. This is the only time the word *apostle* is used in the entire Gospel of Matthew, signifying an intentional focus on its meaning a "a person who is sent." The Father sent the Son, the Son sent the apostles, and the apostles handed on the responsibility for this mission to their successors, the bishops. We are all called to join in this mission through our own vocation, whether priests, religious, married, or single.

Q FOCUS: *Praying for vocations and listening for our call.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Although the Church has been in Ordinary Time since the week after Pentecost, at the end of May, this is the first Sunday that we return to green vestments. The color green can symbolize our growth on the path of discipleship, as we delve more deeply into the life and ministry of Jesus. On June 24, we celebrate the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, who was chosen by God to prepare the way for Jesus.

Church Teaching Connection

"The laborers for the harvest are not chosen through advertising campaigns or appeals of service and generosity, but they are 'chosen' and 'sent' by God. It is he who chooses, it is he who sends, it is Lord who sends, it is he who gives the mission. For this, prayer is important. . . . The field to be cultivated is his. The mission is grace. And if the Apostle is born of prayer, he finds in prayer the light and strength of his action" (Pope Francis, Homily, July 7, 2013).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 9:36-10:8

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

At the sight of the crowds, Jesus' heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector;

James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; Simon from Cana, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, make this proclamation: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

Up to this point, Jesus has been active in his ministry, teaching and healing, drawing huge crowds wherever he goes. But something happens when he sees the people; he sees the depth of their needs with loving compassion.

► **If Jesus saw someone your age was "troubled and abandoned," what might be going on in their life?**

Today, comparing people to sheep has the negative connotation of blindly following without thinking. In biblical times, it was common knowledge that sheep relied upon the guidance and protection of a responsible shepherd. Seeing so many who were lost, troubled, and abandoned deeply bothered Jesus. Comparing them to "sheep without a shepherd" identifies the problem: a lack of responsible leadership leaves an abundance of lost souls yearning for

spiritual healing and guidance. The solution: first, Jesus asks his disciples—all of us—to pray that God send more spiritual leaders for his people.

► **When you're faced with a troubling problem or a stressful situation, what is the first thing you usually do?**

We tend to use the words *disciple* and *apostle* interchangeably, but the Gospels do not because each word signified something different. Disciples commit to learning from a master-teacher to put that knowledge into practice. In Greek, the word *apostle* means "the person who is sent." The only time the Gospel of Matthew uses the word *apostle* instead of *disciple* occurs in today's passage. So faced with the problem of needing good leaders to care for the spiritual needs of the people, Jesus prays. The solution here is to call forth twelve, and send those apostles out with the authority to continue the mission of shepherding God's people to the kingdom of heaven. This is a huge ongoing task that continues today, guided by the Holy Spirit. This is what is meant by apostolic succession: the apostles passed on the responsibility to continue this mission to their successors, the bishops, who are assisted by priests and deacons.

► **What comes to mind when you hear the word "vocations"?**

Notice that Jesus doesn't ask for volunteers or put up a sign-up sheet. He calls them. Spiritual leadership is a calling, or vocation (from the Latin *vocare*, meaning "to call"). Priests and bishops certainly have a special role, but we are all called to serve God in the world in one of four vocations: priesthood, religious life, married life, or single life. Within those vocations we work to fulfill the call we all receive as baptized children of God: to share the Good News. Wondering where God is calling you? Start with prayer.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 206.

Jesus asks all of us, as disciples, to pray for good spiritual leaders.

God answers that prayer by calling us to serve in a particular way through our vocation.

One’s vocation—to priesthood, religious life, marriage, or single life—is a calling from God.

Act on the Word

Being Called to Vocations

For this activity, you will need to visit the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ website (<https://www.usccb.org/prayers/prayers-vocations>) and search for and print copies of several different prayers for vocations. You will also need to arrange guest speakers, per the activity description below.

Arrange for guest speakers to share their own experience of discerning God’s call to the different vocations. If possible, include a speaker from each of the four: married, single, religious, and ordained. Instead of informing the teens about each vocation, ask the speakers to discuss how they came to know that this was the way God was calling them to serve him in the world.

Be sure to explain the following: Most people think of vocations as a choice a person makes. Sometimes we hear people say that they don’t understand why anyone would choose to be married . . . or choose to be a priest. As Christians, a better way to understand this is that we discern and respond to God’s call. Discernment involves prayerfully and honestly separating what is important from what is not and listening with loving attention so as to better understand and follow God’s will for your life.

When inviting each speaker to share, emphasize the focus by asking them to tell the story of how they knew God was calling them to this way of life.

Encourage discussion, as time permits. After the speakers have all shared, include a follow-up discussion with the teens, asking:

- ✧ What did you notice about the role of prayer?
- ✧ What did you notice about discerning what was important versus what was not?
- ✧ What surprised you about the stories of being called to a particular vocation?
- ✧ When it comes to discerning your own vocation, is there anything specific that you want to ask God for?

As the discussion concludes, distribute the variety of prayers for vocations. Have the teens look at how each articulates a slightly different aspect of petitioning God for help with discerning one’s vocation and following God’s call. Choose one to pray together in closing.

Closing Prayer

God of love and mercy,
you sent Jesus Christ into the world for
the forgiveness of sin
and the salvation of all peoples.
Guide our efforts in bringing
reconciliation to our communities
and let our witness bring others to know
and honor your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.