

## 11<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.”

The Gospel today begins with one of the most moving images in all of Scripture. St. Matthew tells us that Jesus looked upon the crowds and was moved with pity because they were "troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd." And so, notice what happens next. Jesus sees the misery. He sees the confusion. He sees the spiritual exhaustion. He sees people who are lost. And then He does something strange. He does not immediately heal everyone. He does not instantly fix society. He does not remove every burden. Instead, He turns to twelve ordinary men and says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." Think about that for a moment. The problem is enormous. The crowds are suffering. The need is overwhelming. And Jesus' solution is... twelve ordinary, weak men: His apostles. If we were writing the Gospel, we would probably come up with a more efficient plan. We would want Jesus to do something dramatic. Something immediate. Something powerful. But Jesus chooses something slower. He chooses ordinary people. And that reveals something profound about how God works.

When God sees a wound in the world, He does not merely perform a miracle. He calls a vocation. When there are people who do not know the truth, He lifts up someone to preach it. When there are people who are unloved, He lifts up someone to love them. When there are people who are hungry, He lifts up someone to feed them. When there are people who are lost, He lifts up someone to guide them home. God's response to human suffering is to transform ordinary people into extraordinary disciples. In other words, when God sees a problem, He often forms saints. This is who we are called to be! Every saint begins as an ordinary person whose life has been captured by grace. That means this Gospel is much more dangerous than it first appears. Most of us hear Jesus describe the crowds and instinctively identify ourselves with them. We think of our own struggles, our own fears, our own need for a shepherd. And certainly, we are part of that crowd. But Jesus does not stop there. He turns and looks at His disciples. In other words, at some point every Christian must stop asking, "Who will help me?" and begin asking, "Whom am I being sent to help?" The Christian life begins with receiving Christ's compassion; it matures when we become instruments of that compassion for others.

There is a temptation today to look at the Church, the culture, our families, our communities, and say, "Somebody should do something." AND Jesus absolutely agrees. But then He points to us, to this very church, and says, "The harvest is plentiful." – in other words I see you. There are young people searching for meaning. There are marriages hanging by a thread. There are elderly people who are lonely. There are Catholics who have forgotten how to pray. There are souls who have never truly encountered Christ. And Jesus still refuses to solve these problems with a simple miracle. He still sends disciples. He still sends laborers. He still sends men and women who are on the path to sainthood. The question is whether we are willing to stop being spectators and become laborers, allowing Christ to make us saints.

Because the greatest surprise of this Gospel is that when Jesus looked upon the crowds with compassion, He did not merely see people in need. He saw the apostles that He was about to send. He saw you and I. And today, when He looks upon THIS parish, He does not simply see a full church. He sees His answers. You may be the answer to someone's loneliness, someone's confusion, someone's prayer. Christ looked upon the crowds and sent apostles. He looks upon the crowds today—and He sends us. So, the question is simple: to whom is Christ sending you?