

Mt 9:36-10:8; Ex 19:2-6a; Rom 5:6-11 The Laborers are Us

Do you know what true greatness really is? We prayed for it in the opening prayer: True greatness is when we please and glorify God by persevering in obeying His commands.

Like God said in the first reading, if we harken to His voice and keep His covenant, we will be His special possession (Ex 19:5)...a holy people and a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6).

That means, like priests, in this mass we will offer up to God--the sacrifice of Jesus on that cross--together with the sacrifice of our lives--for the salvation of the world!

What a mission! And that mission began when God first loved us.

Like St. Paul said: *God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us* (Rom 5:8)...for our salvation!

And we see God's special love for us right away in Jesus.

Jesus is passing through towns and villages, preaching and teaching, healing the sick and driving out demons. But his work never ends. People keep coming to him. And He can see the distress in their eyes.

They were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd (Mt 9:36).
Is it any wonder?

Their religious leaders only cared about themselves. And they blamed them, for their poverty and suffering, because God was punishing them for their sins.

Is that so different from today? People everywhere are driven to despair by the injustice, poverty and suffering all around us.

So, at the sight of the crowds, Jesus' heart was moved with pity for them (Mt 9:36). And His heart is moved with pity for us!

Right away Jesus springs into action. *He said to his disciples...and He is saying this to us:*

“The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest”(Mt 9:37-38).

That *harvest* is the end of time when God will welcome his elect into heaven. And the *laborers* aren't just priests and nuns. The laborers are us!

Jesus is asking us to pray to God—to send us—full of his power and grace—for His harvest. How truly blessed we really are! God wants us to help Jesus bring the sheep home into His Kingdom!

Jesus summons the twelve by name. And Jesus summons us by name. Jesus empowers them with the authority to drive out unclean spirits and to heal the sick (Mt 10:1).

Jesus empowers us when we confess our sins and we receive His mercy. Jesus empowers us when we receive Him--body and blood, soul and divinity--into us in the Holy Eucharist.

Then Jesus says “Go.” *Go...to the lost sheep of the house of Israel* (Mt 10:6).

And Jesus sends us to all the lost sheep--at the end of mass, when the priest says: Go in peace glorifying the Lord with your life!

What are we to do? Jesus says: proclaim the Kingdom, heal people, raise the dead and drive out demons (Mt 10:7-8).

That reminds me of my own calling to the priesthood. On December 7 this year, I will celebrate 13 years as a priest. (That's how long I was an attorney.) Can you believe it?

Many times, when people see me wearing a roman collar in a restaurant, they thank me for saying “yes” to the priesthood. And I am very grateful for that. But what I usually don't have time to explain is this:

When I stumbled home from the bar, turned on the TV, and saw the funeral of St. Pope John Paul II, it wasn't about making a sacrifice. The feeling and obsession that came over me was that I was being called home.

It was never about making a sacrifice or giving something up. It was something entirely different.

For me it was a most beautiful desire—a divine obsession--that took over me, compelling me—knowing that this was my destiny—

--I had no choice and I didn't want to have any choice—because this was the greatest gift God could possibly give me—almost like heaven. It was love. Love from God to me. And love from me to God.

Now is the time to re-awaken the same divine obsession in you for your vocation. And your vocation—is not that different from mine. You are called to become a Laborer for His Harvest.

Not because you are going to feel good about it. Not because you will achieve salvation. But simply because God loves you. And you love God. Period!

Like Jesus said, *without cost you have received; without cost you are to give* (Mt 10:8).

How will we do it? Just stay focused on your model—the tireless Jesus Christ...

Always on the move, teaching and healing, loving and consoling, humble and serving, and always placing the needs of others before His own.

So, whenever you see anyone in need physically--poor, sick or suffering;...

...whenever you see anyone in need spiritually--nonbelievers, a fading faith, and anyone lost to sin;...that is where God is calling you.

Share your faith. What does Jesus mean for you? Be present to them. Listen to them. Hold their hand. Tell them they are God's beloved. And Jesus died for their salvation!

Let us pray: Lord Jesus Christ You have called us by name to become laborers for Your harvest.

Empower us with all grace we need to proclaim the Kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead and drive out the demons of sin.

So that together with You, we may lead the lost sheep Home into Your Kingdom.