

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
We are His People Chosen to be His Own

Exodus 19:2-6a; Psalm 100:1-2,3,5; Romans 5:6-11; Matthew 9:36-10:8

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

"We are his people: the sheep of his flock" (Ps. 100:3).

God chooses us to be his people. It is profoundly wonderful to reflect that God chooses us before we choose him. Being chosen means we belong to someone who loves us unconditionally and who allows us to respond freely. The Responsorial Psalm proclaims and reminds us, "We are his people: the sheep of his flock."

Being God's Chosen People echoes the Old Testament covenant. In that covenant, "he is our God; we are his people; we belong to him," sealed by the blood of an animal as a sign of faithfulness. Time and again, when God's Chosen People face difficulties or become unfaithful, God reminds them of this covenant and of his redeeming acts. We heard God tell Moses to keep this covenant, for they are his special possession, dearer to him, and called to be a priestly and holy people (cf. Ex. 19:2-6). Our Lord Jesus ratified this covenant, and it is now sealed not by the blood of an animal but by his own blood through his sacrifice on the cross. While we were still sinners, he chose to die for us, and we are justified by his blood (cf. Rom 5:8). He is our Lord and Savior, who died for us and continues to be our Shepherd, with whom we belong and who is forever present with us.

Jesus is not only perpetually present with us; he also chooses us to be his presence. Therefore, when we proclaim that we are his people: the sheep of his flock, we can also say that we are Jesus' body—his hands, mouths, eyes, hearts, and feet. So how do we live as his people, and how are we, as his flock, led to reflect on what we say when we say, "We are his people: the sheep of his flock"?

Our Lord Jesus reveals his heart to us in the gospel. "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" (Matt 9:36). The Greek word "splanchnizomai," translated as "moved with pity," denotes deep, visceral compassion. This means Jesus' inner being pours out like a gushing stream, flooding troubled hearts with refreshment and comfort. It is not ordinary "pity" but compassion that is willing to suffer with the beloved, his chosen ones. Such is our God!

The heart of Jesus is drawn to the vulnerable, the poor, and the marginalized. He desires to keep his heart alive through his disciples, who will do the work he does: preach the Good News of salvation, liberate people from the bondage of evil and sin, heal the sick, and bring the dead back to life. He invites us to "ask the Master of the harvest to send out laborers for His harvest." It is our task to pray for a good shepherd. At the same time, Jesus intends to use human hands and hearts, through the ordained minister, to shepherd and provide relief to those who suffer and are poor, and to make his redeeming presence available to all baptized Christians. So all of us, regardless of our status, are called to become shepherds of one another, responsible for one another's happiness, well-being, and salvation.

God not only chose us as his own; he also chose to dwell with us through the Holy Spirit and to nourish us through the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Love, and our union with Jesus. In faith, we eat the love of God so that his love is not only in our minds, memories, and hearts but also in our flesh and blood.

In the litany of the Sacred Heart, we say, "Make our hearts unto yours." The Holy Eucharist is also a giving of Jesus' heart to us. Remember the dialogue of the preface, when the priest says, "Lift up your hearts," and the response is, "We lift them up to the Lord."

We lift our hearts to the heart of Jesus to make them like his, or, better still, to have them replaced by his Sacred Heart, so that we may fully become what we are called to be:

His people, the sheep of his flock.

This is the central grace we seek.

Who he is, so are we!

Fr. Manny Hewe, Pastor