

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

ALWAYS ALIVE IN MISSION



SUNDAY READINGS:

Exodus 19:2-6

Psalm 100:1-3, 5

Romans 5:6-11

Matthew 9:36-10:8

MISSION: THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

Mission permeates the entire New Testament. Today's Gospel from Matthew narrates a key event, where Jesus chooses twelve disciples and sends them out on mission. We should not conclude that mission is only for these twelve apostles; it is the vocation of **all** Jesus' disciples—**all** baptized Christians. Jesus then gives them a

variety of instructions. I see at least ten "mission principles" emerging from today's scripture readings.

- (1) All mission and evangelization begin with God's initiative, with Jesus' choice. We do not engage in mission based on our decision. Recall Jesus' words: "You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last" (Jn 15:16).
- (2) Mission is not a personal or individual project. Jesus collectively sends out his messengers. We understand that as followers of Jesus "we're all in this together" for more effective witnessing.

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(3) Recall that “the harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few.” This was true in Jesus’ time and remains true today. We must recognize the great task that faces us; we turn to the Lord in prayer, asking for additional laborers. **(4)** Next, Jesus gives a brief, yet direct instruction: “Be on your way.” Do not delay! Don’t wait to start until all the details are in place and the perfect mission plan has been formulated. Go, and go now!

(5) Remember that you will face many challenges. Recognize that some people will welcome your message, while others will reject both you and your very mission. Always be ready to move on; persecution for the faith is nothing new in Christianity. **(6)** Jesus advises his missionaries to “travel light.” Don’t let material “stuff” weigh you down and get in the way of your ministry of preaching Jesus’ Good News.

(7) The missioner is to extend Christ’s “mercy and compassion” to all. Find like-minded people of peace; work closely with them. **(8)** Be humble and accept what is offered in terms of food and accommodations; do not go searching for a more comfortable situation. Be content with the hospitality extended to you.

(9) Reach out to the sick, marginalized, and needy you encounter. Recall Pope Francis’ frequent advice to go to the margins, peripheries, and excluded in society. **(10)** Make the announcement of Jesus’ *kingdom message* your central emphasis; proclaim that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Indeed, as Christians we all carry on the mission ministry that Jesus gave us. We can be inspired by the well-known saying of Saint Teresa of Avila: “Christ has no body on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ looks out to the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless others now.” Undoubtedly, Jesus’ final words of today’s Gospel are always relevant: “Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.”

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading - Exodus 19:2-6: By reading the Old Testament we learn how God prepared for the arrival of Jesus Christ. Exodus, the second book of the Bible, narrates how the people departed from Egypt and traveled through the desert of Sinai. After about three months they reached Mount Sinai; there God promises that if they hearken to his voice and keep the covenant, they will be God's "special possession" and become "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation."

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 100:1-3, 5: This psalm expresses the joy at being God's people and the sheep of his flock. Because of this wonderful gift, we "sing joyfully to the Lord," "coming before him with joyful song." Truly, the Lord's "kindness endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations."

Second Reading - Romans 5:6-11: Paul's profound letter to the Romans tells of the marvelous way that we have received salvation. How did God *prove* his radical love for us? While we were still sinners, Christ voluntarily died for us. What further evidence of God's love do we need? A just and holy man willingly gave his own life for sinners! Is any greater proof of God's love possible?

Gospel - Matthew 9:36-10:8: This year we are reading the Gospel of Matthew. In today's passage we hear about the important calling of the twelve apostles; they are commissioned to announce the coming of God's Kingdom. In Jesus' time as well as now and always, the Gospel needs laborers. We continually pray for committed evangelizers, including laity, religious, ordained, missionaries.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who recently published three short, meditative books: ► *Living in Joyful Hope*, ► *Exploring Vatican II Treasures*, and ► *A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis* (www.faithalivebooks.com).

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