

**First Reading – Exodus 19:2-6a:** The Israelites arrive at Mount Sinai, where God speaks to Moses and tells him to convey a message to the people. God reminds the Israelites of how He delivered them from slavery in Egypt and declares that if they obey His commands and keep His covenant, they will be a treasured possession and a kingdom of priests.

**Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 100:** This passage is a call to all people to praise and serve the Lord joyfully, recognizing that we are His people and the sheep of His flock. The verses emphasize God’s goodness, His role as creator and caretaker of His people, and His eternal kindness and faithfulness.

**Second Reading – Romans 5:6-11:** God showed His love for humanity by sending Jesus Christ to die for our sins while we were still sinners. Through Jesus’ sacrifice, we can be reconciled with God and receive the gift of eternal life.

**Gospel – Matthew 9:36-10:8:** Jesus has compassion for the crowds. He decides to send out His twelve disciples to heal the sick, raise the dead, and proclaim the good news of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus instructs His disciples to freely give what they have received, encouraging them to serve others with love and generosity.

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Jesus was moved with compassion by the plight of people who were wandering and destitute—a situation that the Jewish “teachers” were unable to resolve for them. They were like sheep without a shepherd, lacking spiritual direction in their lives. In His human nature, Jesus Himself required the collaboration of His disciples to assist Him in His work as both a “shepherd” and a “healer.”

Faced with the vast scope of the apostolic mission, the very first thing Jesus asked of His disciples was to pray: *“The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few! Ask the Master of the harvest to send out laborers to gather the harvest.”* Prayer constitutes the disciples' primary form of commitment to the mission. For if one truly believes in the importance of the mission one is called to fulfill, then every effort will be made to ensure that it does not perish with us, but rather continues through others—both through us and after us.

Jesus sent His disciples forth to proclaim the Good News, for He desired that His preaching mission endure throughout the ages, passing from one generation to the next. This is accomplished through those individuals called to collaborate with Him, performing His work empowered by the authority He has bestowed upon them. The presence and mission of the Church throughout the various epochs of history have been part of God's plan from the very beginning, established by His divine will rather than by human initiative.

### **1. The Selection of the Apostles**

Jesus called and chose them; they did not presume to select themselves or put themselves forward as candidates. This signifies that Jesus occupies a higher position—He is the center—and that the disciples do not possess the authority to make themselves the standard. Thus, the primary prerequisite for becoming an Apostle is to be chosen by God. The disciples came “to” Him; this implies that they had to be set apart from the crowds and draw near to Him. Thus, the second condition is that when called, they must be set apart—meaning that a transformation in their way of life is required, leading them to a higher standard of living.

Within the Church, being chosen for a specific task or ministry is the result of God's selection, mediated through the discernment of the ecclesial community; it is neither a matter of hereditary succession nor of self-nomination. Therefore, God's will must always be placed above all else; whether it aligns with our personal preferences or not, we must remain submissive to His divine will. Specifically, for those who have been chosen—whether they be the Pope or a Catechist—there is an obligation to strive to live a life of greater virtue than the general populace, thereby proving worthy of the station they hold.

## **2. The Granting of Authority to Preach and to Heal**

*“Jesus called the Twelve Apostles together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases.”* This can be understood as the authority bestowed upon pastors through the Sacraments, ensuring that the forces of evil cannot impede the work of proclaiming the Gospel. In particular, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, pastors heal the spiritual ailments and wounds of souls.

Preaching and healing constitute a holistic mission that embraces the human person in their entirety—both body and soul. To proclaim the truth that bestows God's saving grace, while simultaneously caring for the physical well-being of life, demonstrates that salvation and human development go hand in hand. In other words, the Gospel and daily life are inextricably linked; religious life and social development proceed in parallel.

Ministry goes hand in hand with mission; when we accept a specific office, we are not meant to sit idly by and merely enjoy its privileges, but rather to go forth to those for whom we bear responsibility—to serve them and to bear witness to God before them.

*“Tell them: ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.’”* To preach the Gospel is to make disciples of all nations—to call people to return to their status as children of God and to become brothers and sisters within one family. In doing so, the Kingdom of Heaven is officially established right here on earth.

Religious life and social development emerge as a fresh insight discovered within today's Gospel theme: Upon receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, we take upon ourselves the mission to carry out God's work, to proclaim God's truth, and to share the salvation that God has accomplished. At the same time, as we proclaim the Word of God, we cannot be negligent or remain closed off to efforts that serve the cause of social development—efforts that serve the well-being of our brothers and sisters.

*Lord Jesus, upon receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, we take upon ourselves the mission to carry out Your work, to proclaim Your truth, and to share the salvation You have accomplished. Grant that, as we proclaim Your Word, we may never be negligent or remain closed off to efforts that serve the cause of social development—efforts that serve the well-being of our brothers and sisters. Amen.*