Homily of Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, 2026

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

In the first reading, God sent Moses to speak to the Israelites: "If you hearken to my voice my voice and keep to my covenant, you shall be my special possession…" We know that many times, the Israelites chose something else to possess them and did not hearken to God's voice nor kept his covenant. The consequences of their choices brought them a lot of difficulties. For instance, the first reading of Saturday's morning Mass says, "They forsook the temple of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and began to serve the sacred poles and idols; and because of this crime of theirs, wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 24:18).

It is our own story too. Whatever possesses us controls us. For instance, one who is possessed by anger, is controlled by it. One who is possessed by envy and jealousy, is controlled by them. One who is possessed by hate, is controlled by it. One who is possessed by pornography, is controlled by it. One who is possessed by power, is controlled by it. One who is possessed by money, is controlled by it. One who is possessed by alcohol, is controlled by it. One who is possessed by laziness, is controlled by it. One who is possessed by immorality, is controlled by it. One who is possessed by grief or depression or despair, is controlled by them. One who is possessed by gadgets, is controlled by them. One who is possessed by worldly life, is controlled it. One who is possessed by any addiction, is controlled by it. One who is possessed by the evil one, is controlled by the evil one. And so on. Our actions are the result of the spirit, or the vice, or whatever that possesses us. Ungodly possessions cause spiritual blindness and deafness to what God wants us to see and hear. Ungodly possessions corrupt the mind and harden the heart and prevent goodness from prevailing.

On the other hand, one who is possessed by goodness and the Spirit of God is controlled by them. The person hears God's voice and is godly in his or her words and actions. St. Paul speaks of this where he instructs about the one who possesses the Holy Spirit and yields the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). There are other fruits that are not mentioned by St. Paul that are alluded in today's gospel.

The second reading is very encouraging to us. No one's case is hopeless. When we are off the rails due of our ungodly and immoral possessions, we come to Jesus who reconciles us to God. Jesus brings back our wheels on the rails. All evils are due to remaining in ungodly and immoral possessions and refusing to receive the message of salvation and reconciliation.

In the gospel, Jesus sends us to continue the message of salvation and reconciliation. He gives us authority over spiritual and physical possessions in us and others; to drive out unclean spirits and to cure every disease and every illness. He says to us, "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons." In the mission, Jesus warns us, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." By this statement, Jesus instructs us to be focused on the mission and not deviate or be distracted. Jesus adds, "Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give." Which means, to act with pure, selfless generosity and service, without keeping score or worrying about what one might lose, sacrifice, or receive in return. We pray for God's grace to enable us to accept this instruction and obey it.

In the first reading, God sent Moses to the Israelites. In the second reading God sent Jesus to the world. In the gospel, Jesus sent his apostles to the lost house of Israel. We are the 'Moses.' We are the 'apostles.' We are "Jesus' disciples". We are the 'laborers.' We pray for the grace to recognize our calling and to embrace

it. As God sends us, let us not be like the biblical young man “who went away sad, for he had many possessions” (Matthew 19:22).

We pray for an increase in the vocations of the clergy and the religious who are special laborers of the harvest. In the gospel, Jesus tells us one of the reasons to pray, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few.” These special laborers are a “chosen race.” They are “a people set apart.” We pray that they may be possessed and controlled by the Holy Spirit. We pray that they may be a “holy nation.” Amen.

Jesus’s heart was moved with pity when he saw the troubled and the abandoned crowd. May his heart be moved with pity for many of us who are even more troubled by our various dire needs and desires. “O Lord, come to our assistance, O Lord, make haste to help us” (Psalm 70:1).

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