June 14, 2026
11th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Matthew 9:36-10:8

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. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; Simon from Cana, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, make this proclamation: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.

Background:
Last week we celebrated the feast of The Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus, or Corpus Christi. The Gospel for that feast was taken from John's Gospel. In that Gospel text, Jesus declared that he is the living bread that has come down from heaven. John also recorded the reaction of the Jews to Jesus' teaching, saying that they quarreled among themselves, asking how Jesus could give them his flesh to eat.

This Sunday, we return to Ordinary time and resume with the 11th Sunday. The Gospel text is from Matthew and there is a shift in the mood of the text. Here the Jews are not quarreling about Jesus' teaching, but Jesus is calling the disciples and they are responding.

It helps to review the series of events that lead up to the passage for this Sunday in Matthew's Gospel. Jesus invites Matthew, a tax collector, to follow him. The Pharisees question Jesus' association with Matthew and other sinners. Jesus then encounters disciples of John the Baptist who question the fact that he and his disciples do not fast. Then a court official asks that Jesus come and lay hands on his daughter who has just died. On the way to his house, a woman touches Jesus' garment, hoping to be cured of her hemorrhaging and is cured. Jesus then continues and restores life to the daughter of the official. Then Jesus heals two blind men and casts an evil spirit out of a mute person. Matthew says that Jesus looked at the crowd that had gathered and was moved with compassion for them. This is where the Gospel text for this Sunday begins.

The first part of the Gospel text describes Jesus being moved by the sight of the crowd. Matthew does not describe the particular situation in the crowd to which Jesus is referring. There is no indication of a particular person, a group of people, or the general state of the people that moves Jesus. Without a clear understanding of the crowd, the focus of attention moves to the compassion of Jesus. The verb used, "splachnizomai," denotes an agitation that is at the very depths of a person: one's loins or womb. This would connote Jesus having an emotional bond of love, as for a daughter or son. The crowd is described as being like sheep without a shepherd, which means without proper guidance and in danger of going astray or falling into some peril. Jesus uses the familiar image of the harvest without enough workers to describe the situation. In both Jewish and Christian traditions, the harvest is a common image for the end time, when both the good and the evil will be gathered and then separated. In the 13th chapter of his Gospel, Matthew has collected four parables about the realm of God. Two of them are concerned with the gathering at harvest, and two contain images of the good being gathered with the wicked. This need for people to be "gathered" in order to be included in God's reign leads Jesus to action, first summoning twelve disciples and giving them authority, and then sending them out.

After being called, the apostles are given power similar to that which Jesus himself exercised over evil. Then they are sent, quite specifically, to the lost sheep of Israel. This does not mean that the non-Jews were to always be excluded. As we heard on the recent feast of the Ascension, Jesus eventually commissions his disciples to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20) The lost sheep may be either a reference to those who need to return to the Lord, or to those who are on the fringe of society, such as the poor, widows, and lepers. The exhortation to give without expecting repayment would be heard as very counter-cultural. In this society all gifts carried with them the expectation of repayment.

Reflection Questions:

1. Recall a time when your heart was moved for another. Recall as much about the situation as you are able. What was it like for you now to recall your being so moved?
2. Can you list some things that Jesus might have seen in the crowd that day that would have moved his heart to pity?
3. What do you think it was like for Jesus to experience himself being so moved?
4. Do you think that Jesus' experience of the crowd and himself led in some way to him calling the disciples to be not just disciples but apostles?
5. What do you think the twelve disciples, who Jesus first summoned and then named as apostles, were experiencing as Jesus named them and told them that he was giving them authority over unclean spirits? What are some of the things they might have been feeling as he sent them out to the lost sheep?
6. What goes through you as you read the names of those apostles?
7. Who are the troubled and abandoned in your world, and in your parish, and in your family?
8. Can you take some time now just to talk with Jesus or God about what you are experiencing in this Gospel reading?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are prepared and distributed by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel, as edited from Reflections authored by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to: annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is https://fscc-calledtobe.org/. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click there will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. Used with permission. All rights reserved. No portion of this text may be reproduced by any means without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Please include this information when printing or forwarding.

Excerpts from the readings for June 14, 2026, the Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

In those days, the Israelites came to the desert of Sinai and pitched camp.
While Israel was encamped here in front of the mountain, Moses went up the mountain to God.
Then the Lord called to him and said, "Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob; tell the Israelites:

You have seen for yourselves how I treated the Egyptians and how I bore you up on eagle wings
and brought you here to myself. Therefore, if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant,
you shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all other people,
though all the earth is mine. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation."

We are his people: the sheep of his flock.
Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands; serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful song.
Know that the Lord is God; he made us, his we are; his people, the flock he tends.
The Lord is good: his kindness endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Brothers and sisters:
Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly.
Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person
one might even find courage to die.
But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. How much
more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath.
Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son,
how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life. Not only that, but we also boast of God
through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

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.
Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few;
so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."
Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits
to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness.
The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew;
James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew,
Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus;
Simon from Cana, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.
Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter
a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
As you go, make this proclamation: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Cure the sick, raise the dead,
cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give."

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