

## PASTOR'S WEEKLY MESSAGE FOR THE 11TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME A

The readings for the Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time invite us to reflect on a single, powerful theme: dedication. Throughout Scripture today, we see God's dedication to His people, Christ's dedication to His mission, and the call for our own dedication to the work of the Gospel. To dedicate ourselves means to give significant time, effort, and heart to something because it truly matters. Today, the Word of God asks us to consider what — and whom — we are dedicating our lives to.

In the first reading from Exodus, God declares Israel to be His “treasured possession,” a “holy nation,” a people set apart. This is not merely a title; it is an act of divine dedication. God chooses a people who are imperfect, often stubborn, and frequently unfaithful. Yet He binds Himself to them in love. This same dedication extends to us today. God does not wait for our perfection. He dedicates Himself to us because we are loved, not because we are flawless.

St. Paul deepens this theme in the second reading by reminding us that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. This is the ultimate expression of dedication — a total giving of self for the sake of those who could not repay Him. If we ever question our worth, we need only remember that Christ's dedication was so complete that He gave His life for us before we ever turned toward Him. His mission was formidable, yet He embraced it fully, out of love.

In the Gospel, Jesus sends out the Twelve for the first time. He instructs them to heal the sick, cleanse lepers, cast out demons, and proclaim the kingdom — essentially telling them to do everything they have seen Him do. He does not ask them to be spectators but participants. He calls them to dedication. And then He speaks words that echo through every generation: “*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.*” This statement is as true today as it was then. The world is full of people longing for hope, healing, and meaning. The harvest is abundant. Yet the workers remain few.

Why is this so? Why are there fewer laborers today than in previous generations? The first reason is simple: we are not dedicated to prayer for vocations. Jesus explicitly tells us, “Pray to the owner of the harvest to send workers.” Yet how often do we do this? How many of us regularly pray for young people to consider the priesthood, sisterhood, or brotherhood? How many pray for married couples to dedicate themselves to ministry, service, or parish life? When was the last time we prayed specifically for vocations? Jesus has placed in our hands everything we need to gather the harvest, especially the power of prayer, yet we often leave this tool unused. A parish that once prayed a one-minute prayer for vocations at every Mass produced six seminarians and two religious sisters within five years. The harvest was always plentiful — prayer simply opened hearts. This is why we must renew our commitment to praying for vocations.

The second reason the laborers are few is that families are no longer seedbeds for vocations. In past generations, parents spoke openly about religious life as a noble calling. Today, we

encourage our children to become doctors, engineers, athletes, or entrepreneurs — all good things — but rarely do we say, “Have you thought about being a priest?” or “Have you considered being a sister?” When was the last time we encouraged our children to ask God what He wants for their lives? A mother once told her teenage son, “I would be proud if you became a priest.” That single sentence planted a seed that eventually grew into his vocation. Families have tremendous influence, and we must rediscover how to encourage vocations within our own homes.

The third reason is deeply personal. Each of us must ask what we can do to help gather the harvest. If you are young, have you ever asked God whether He might be calling you to religious life? Not “Do I want it?” but “Does God want it?” If you are older, have you asked how you might support vocations — through prayer, financial help, encouragement, or involvement in parish ministries? A retired man once told his pastor he was too old to do much. The pastor asked, “Can you pray?” He said yes. Two years later, his grandson entered seminary. Even small acts of dedication can bear great fruit. Each of us can explore ways to serve the harvest in our own circumstances.

These readings challenge us to examine our dedication. God is dedicated to us. Christ is dedicated to us. The apostles dedicated themselves to the mission. Now the question becomes: Are we dedicated to the harvest? Dedication does not mean doing everything. It means doing something — faithfully, consistently, lovingly.

Imagine a vast field ready for harvest — golden, abundant, beautiful — but with only a few workers walking through it. Some crops fall. Some rot. Some are never gathered. Now imagine that field is the world, and the workers are us. Jesus is not asking for perfection. He is asking for dedication.

May today’s readings inspire us to dedicate ourselves to prayer, to nurturing vocations in our families, and to offering our lives — in whatever way possible — to the mission of Christ. The harvest is plentiful. The laborers are few. But the Lord of the harvest is with us. Let us dedicate ourselves to His work.