

# ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

As we move into Ordinary Time, the Church invites us to reflect on what it means to live out the new life we have received. The intensity of Easter and Pentecost gives way to the steady, daily work of discipleship. In recovery, this shift is familiar. Moments of clarity, surrender, and spiritual awakening are important, but lasting change is formed through consistent, daily practice.

The readings this Sunday speak clearly about identity and mission. In the first reading, God reminds the people of Israel of what He has already done: *“I bore you up on eagle wings and brought you here to myself”* (Exodus 19:4-6). Their identity begins as a gift. They belong to Him. The invitation to *“hearken to my voice and keep my covenant”* is not a condition for being loved, but a response to it. It is a way of living into the relationship they have already been given.

This is an important starting point in recovery. Many of us came in with a distorted sense of identity. We may have defined ourselves by our addiction, our failures, or the ways we had hurt others. Shame often shaped how we saw ourselves. Recovery begins to change that. We come to see that we are not defined by our worst moments, but by our relationship with God. We are His beloved sons and daughters.

From that identity comes direction. Step Three invites us to make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God. This is not a one-time decision, but a daily practice. We learn to listen for God’s voice through prayer, Scripture, and the wisdom of others in recovery. We begin to recognize that we do not have to rely on our own understanding alone.

The responsorial psalm reinforces this truth: *“We are his people: the sheep of his flock.”* In recovery, we often hear the

importance of staying “in the middle of the herd.” This is not about losing individuality, but about recognizing our need for guidance and community. Isolation was often where our addiction grew strongest. Connection becomes a place where healing takes root.

As we continue in recovery, we are invited into deeper healing through the work of Steps Four through Nine. These steps, along with the Sacrament of Reconciliation, help us address the harm we have caused and the wounds we carry. In the second reading, Saint Paul reminds us of the foundation of this work (Romans 5:8): *“God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”* We do not earn God’s love through our efforts. We respond to a love that has already been given.

The gospel offers a powerful image of how Jesus sees us (Matthew 9:36): *“At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd.”* Many of us know what it is like to feel that way. Before recovery, we may have felt lost, disconnected, or unsure where to turn. Jesus responds to that condition not with judgment, but with compassion.

He then sends out His disciples with a mission: to bring healing, hope, and freedom to others. This reflects the movement of recovery. What we receive is not meant to be kept to ourselves. Step Twelve reminds us that having had a spiritual awakening, we seek to carry this message to others.

This does not require perfection. The disciples themselves were still learning. What mattered was their willingness to go, to trust, and to share what they had received. The same is true for us. We are not called to have everything figured out

before being useful to others. Our honesty, our experience, and our willingness to serve can become a source of hope.

Recovery is lived one day at a time. We remain grounded in our identity as God’s beloved, stay connected to the fellowship, continue the work of healing, and remain open to serving others. In doing so, we participate in the ongoing work of God in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When have you experienced a shift from defining yourself by your struggles to seeing yourself as a beloved child of God?
- How are you practicing Step Three in your daily life right now?
- In what ways are you being invited to share hope or support others in their recovery journey?

## MASS READINGS

**FIRST READING** Exodus 19:2-6a

**RESP. PS.** Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5

**SECOND READING** Romans 5:6-11

**GOSPEL** Matthew 9:36-10:8