

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time



Through our baptism we are claimed by God as His beloved children, which is affirmed as we begin to make our way through the Twelve Steps of recovery. Each of the readings in this Sunday's liturgy establishes our identity in relationship to the Author of Life and gives us direction as to what we can do as a result. In the First Reading, God speaks to our ancestors—the people of Israel who were recently held captive by the Egyptians:

*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.*

We have been freed from the shackles of lust addiction and shown a way to live life with purpose, passion, and peace. While we understand the importance of striving for spiritual progress and know that none among us is perfect (Romans 3:10, 23), we strive daily for the knowledge of God's will and the power to carry it out.

Step Three invites us to make a decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God. We do this by learning to hear His voice in prayer, spending time with scripture, remaining active in the Twelve Steps, and with a great deal of support from our brothers and sisters in Christ. The place often most conducive to knowing and doing God's will is in the middle of the herd. Perhaps not shockingly, this Sunday's Responsorial Psalm notes:

*We are his people: the sheep of his flock.
Know that the Lord is God;
he made us, his we are;
his people, the flock he tends.*

Moving further through the Steps, we embark on a path toward reconciliation with God and our fellows. Steps Four through Nine and the Sacrament of Confession are instrumental in fostering healing where relationships were once fractured. Saint Paul proclaims in this Sunday's Second Reading:

*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.*

*Not only that,
but we also boast of God through our Lord Jesus
Christ,
through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

Reflect upon your darkest hour in the midst of your battle with lust addiction, sexual compulsions, and other unhealthy attachments. Now place yourself among the people who Jesus was encountering as he went to various town and villages preaching the gospel and curing diseases. This Sunday's Gospel Reading begins:

*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.*

As a result, Jesus empowers his disciples, who have had their own spiritual awakening, with authority to cure unclean spirits and share a message of hope. We are his disciples walking the earth today. It is vastly important to remember the gift that we were freely given and to generously give it away. We are instructed by the conclusion of the Gospel:

*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.*

Reflection Questions

- How does knowing your identity as a beloved child of God influence how you see the world?
- How have you been reconciled with God, others, or yourself through working the Twelve Steps?
- Describe yourself as a disciple. How have you been empowered to cure unclean spirits and share a message of hope with others?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Exodus 19:2-6a

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5

Second Reading: Romans 5:6-11

Gospel: Matthew 9:36-10:8