

HOMILY for 11th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

As I reflect on this Sunday's Gospel, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A seminary student was preaching his first sermon on this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 9:36 – 10:8). He meant to say, "Jesus calls us to heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out the devil." However, he was quite nervous and what he actually said was, "Jesus calls us to heal the dead, cast out the sick, and raise the devil."

Anyway, we just heard in today's Gospel how Jesus saw the desperate need of our world for some spiritual medicine. It needs to hear His Good News to uplift its spirit & help it deal with its daily challenges. Here is how this Sunday's Gospel shares with us Jesus' reaction to our world, "At the sight of the crowds, the heart of Jesus was moved with pity. They were lying prostrate from exhaustion, like sheep without a shepherd. He said to His disciples: 'The harvest is good, but laborers are scarce. Beg the harvest master to send out laborers to gather his harvest.'"

The first thing I have heard from that Gospel passage is that Jesus was moved with pity at the sight of the crowds. In other words, He saw the people's miseries & felt sorry for them. Jesus did not see our human miserable life & then look the other way. Other human leaders, including religious ones, might do that. But, our Lord would never do that. That is why He reached out to heal the sick & the suffering & feed the hungry throughout His ministry. In fact, once His disciples wanted to turn away a hungry crowd because of their lack of resources, Jesus insisted that they should feed the crowd themselves. However, Jesus' compassion for our humanity did not stop at healing & feeding them. He wanted to save their souls & keep them from the eternal fire of Hell. Today's Second Reading shares with us how Jesus did that as following, "At the appointed time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for us godless people. It is rare that anyone should lay down his life for a just person... It is precisely in this that God proves His love for us: that while we were sinners, Christ died for us." As you can see, Paul wants to remind us about our Lord's caring & compassionate heart. He did not offer His life on the Cross to bring us salvation because that would bring Him glory or make Him feel good. Rather, He did it because He loved us & pitied our miserable life on earth.

We often talk about Jesus with wonderful qualities such as holy, divine, wise, courageous, powerful, miraculous, & so on while overlooking His very unique quality of compassion. We might also have read the four Gospels before & focused on the Passion or Resurrection story of our Lord while overlooking today's Gospel passage. But, let me assure you that this passage lets us have a glimpse into the heart of Jesus. There we see that His compassion for humanity was the reason why He died on the Cross for the salvation of the world & did all the miracles in the Gospels for its people. If He didn't care or have any compassion, He would not do any miracle or die on the Cross for the world. In fact, it is the caring & compassionate heart of Jesus that distinguishes Him from other world leaders. Many of us often search for a political or religious leader who shares the same points of view with us, or speaks eloquently. We might like certain leaders because of their good look, popularity, wealth, intelligence, or other personal qualities.

Let me suggest a very important quality for us to pick a political or religious leader, namely, someone with a caring & compassionate heart. If someone has that quality, I can

guarantee you that he/she would never disappoint us. I would go on further & say that we should pick our friends, spouses, employers/employees, business partners, or any important relationship based on a caring & compassionate heart. If we can find someone with that wonderful quality, we can count on that person to be our faithful friend, or trusted business partner. If our world has a lot of members with a caring & compassionate heart, we would not have all the current social problems. In fact, I would dare to say that all the senseless acts of violence happening in our world right now would disappear if those culprits would have a caring & compassionate heart. That is why we need to educate & train our children at the early age to be caring & compassionate instead of focusing them on being smart with technology, or gifted with other talents.

Another important spiritual lesson that today's Gospel teaches us is that Jesus has chosen us to be His disciples & sent us out to the world with an important mission. Here is how that lesson is explained to us, "...Then He [Jesus] summoned His twelve disciples & gave them authority to expel unclean spirits & cure sickness & disease of every kind.... As you go, make this announcement: 'The reign of God is at hand!' Cure the sick, raise the dead, heal the leper, & expel demons. The gifts you have received, give as a gift." In case you have not realized it yet, we are special in the eyes of Jesus, who has chosen us to be His disciples & missionaries to the world. I don't know about you, but I feel that it is an honor & a great challenge for us to be the disciples of Jesus. He saw a crowd hungry for spiritual nourishment & called the first disciples to help Him take care of that need. Two thousand years later, that need is still there; & therefore Jesus continues to call us to help Him with His mission. That mission involves bringing healing to the sick & the suffering & driving away evil spirits from our world. Seeing how much suffering our world has to endure every day & all the violence happening around us, Jesus needs us bring His healing grace & Good News to our broken world more now than ever. Couldn't you give Him a hand & try to show Him to the world every day?

My dear brothers & sisters, we were told that Jesus saw a crowd & pitied them for their desperate need of spiritual nourishment. He calls us to have a caring & compassionate heart like Him & help show the world His Good News & His healing grace. Wouldn't you join me to share the Good News of Jesus & His healing grace with the world today?