

HOMILY for 11th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's First Reading tells us how the special relationship between the Lord & the Israelites had begun as following, "...The Lord called him [Moses] & said, 'Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob; tell the Israelites: You have seen for yourselves how I treated the Egyptians & how I bore you up on eagle wings, & brought you here to myself. Therefore, if you hearken to my voice & 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.'" I do not know about you, but I have often wondered how the Israelites have become the chosen people of God. Today's First Reading lets us know how they did it. They listened to the Lord & kept up His Covenant with them. They have seen how the Lord brought them out of bondage in Egypt & finally admitted His miraculous work for them. They have been promised to have the favorite status of a nation compared to Egypt & other kingdoms of the world by following the Commandments of the Lord. They have distinguished themselves from other countries by living according to the way of the Lord & forming a good, faithful relationship with Him.

Meanwhile, today's Second Reading reveals to us how Christians established a special relationship with the Lord as following, "...At the appointed time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for us godless men... While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Now that we have been justified by His blood, it is all the more certain that we shall be saved by Him from God's wrath... that we who have been reconciled will be saved by His life." We Christians apparently have been reconciled & saved by the death of Christ. We were given the favorite status with God & the key to the Kingdom of Heaven by the compassionate act of God's Son Jesus. Paul evidently wanted us to know that we have earned a special relationship with God by the sacrifice & Cross of Jesus. We have not achieved the favorite status with God by our own merits & hard work. Rather, we have been chosen & blessed with a special relationship with God because of God's compassion & forgiveness for us. If God were hateful & vengeful, we would never be the chosen people of God & inherit a place in God's Kingdom. Therefore, we should be thankful to have such a caring & compassionate God. Otherwise, we would not be called Catholics/Christians & have a promised place in Heaven.

However, Christianity is not an exclusive country club. God does not want to shut out of Heaven the rest of the world. Rather, God wants to welcome as many people as possible to be Catholic/Christian & share a place in Heaven with God after this life. That is why Jesus asks us His disciples to go out into the world & invite everyone to take part in that wonderful Catholic/Christian vision. Today's Gospel shares Jesus' command for us & wishes for the world as following, "...The harvest is good, but laborers are scarce. Beg the harvest master to send out laborers to gather his harvest." It continues, "...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 leprosy, & expel demons. The gift you have received, give as a gift." Jesus evidently saw the need to invite more people to be His disciples & increase membership of the Kingdom of Heaven. That is why He called on His current followers to go out & show the world all the blessings of being His chosen people. They would help expel demons & evil spirits, cure sickness & disease, heal the leper & the brokenhearted, & feed the hungry. They would help the world

see the miraculous power & the amazing abilities that His special people would have over the whole Creation.

It's surely an honor to be the chosen people of God. For the Lord will favor us & give us special protection & guidance. He will watch over us & do everything in His power to bring us all sorts of blessings. When we become the chosen people of God, we will receive lots of benefits & bonuses. We will not have to worry about or be afraid of anything in this life. For the Lord will be our shield & salvation. When we get to the Gate of Heaven, He will be able to recognize us & welcome us into His Kingdom. However, like the chosen people of God in the Old Testament, we got to live up to the teachings & Commandment that the Lord has told us. We have to carry on His mission of salvation that He had asked His disciples to do in today's Gospel.

My dear brothers & sisters, it sure is an honor to be the chosen people of God & have a special relationship with the Lord. It is certainly a blessing to be the disciples of Jesus & be called Catholic/Christian. More importantly, it is a serious duty for us to live up to our Christian way of life & follow His Commandments. Once we are able to do that, the Lord will always be there for us & answer our calls in times of need. Of course, He will prepare for us a place in His Kingdom & tell us, "Good & faithful servants, come & inherit the Kingdom that has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world."