

## 11<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – YEAR A (2026)

Today's is one of those rare Gospel readings that has no obvious modern application: presenting us simply with facts about the commissioning of the Twelve, it describes the conditions under which Jesus sent out his Apostles to undertake their first mission – a set of instructions that does not translate easily or directly into contemporary methods of evangelisation. What is, perhaps, most pertinent and enduring about this Gospel passage is Jesus' assessment of the situation in his own day, which can be applied to ours and to any: 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few'. And, whilst his injunction to pray for more labourers to be sent into the mission field is often understood to be a prayer for more vocations to the sacred priesthood, it is not so restrictive. Of course, the Church needs priests to celebrate the Sacraments, preach the Word, and lead God's people in worship and service; but it also needs all of the Faithful to play their part in proclaiming that 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand', and that the only way to enter it is through faith in Jesus Christ. In this sense, then, every Christian is a labourer sent into the harvest, every Christian is an Apostle – a word that means 'sent out'. And so, today's Gospel reading, though not directly applicable to our own situation, serves to remind us that we all have a duty to share the Good News of Jesus Christ; and, whilst not giving us direct prescriptions about how to do that, it sets an agenda for the manner in which we might go about our task, even if it doesn't provide the means.

In many ways, Christian discipleship, and the practical living out of the Faith, is much harder for the laity than for the clergy: priests and religious – monks and nuns – have very clear and defined roles in the life of the Church; and established disciplines and expectations by which we operate. But, unlike we ‘professional prayers’, for most Christians – for you – the patterns may be less clear. Yes, all Christians are called to make time for worship, prayer and the service of God in our neighbour, and we could all be more faithful in doing all three; but, on top of that, there remains Jesus’ command to share and proclaim our faith, as those sent out into the world to share his Good News, as we get on with the often tedious, and sometimes troublesome, business of daily life. And the question that this morning’s Gospel reading poses, even it doesn’t often a ready answer, is: how are we to do that? How might I, how might you, witness to Jesus Christ and his saving love in our homes, our places of work or education, and amongst our families and friends?

Well, even though it might sound difficult, there are some easy wins: first, prioritise God in your life. Make more of an effort to come to Mass every Sunday – the habit of coming to church is itself a public act of witness, let alone being the foundation upon which everything else is laid. When we don’t avail ourselves of the Sacraments, we deprive ourselves of grace; and if we consequently feel that God is far away from us, then we shouldn’t lay the blame for that at his door. Likewise, make time for prayer, and for placing yourself in

the presence of God: effective prayer does not need to be long, but it needs to be focused. Use a crucifix, a book of prayers or the Rosary to help you; and don't be embarrassed about practising devotions in your own home. Christian parents should pray with their children, remembering that the Faith is as much caught as it is taught; and neither should they be afraid to talk with them about God, and matters of faith – the life of the soul is just as important as that of the body. Evangelism really does begin at home.

Secondly, have the courage to let others know that you are a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ: this might take the form of wearing a visible symbol, such as a cross, just as it might involve offering to pray for a friend or colleague in need, or even be an explanation as to why you have taken a stand on a particular matter of ethics or morality because of your Christian convictions. Any and all of these might lead to conversations which, in turn, may open up an opportunity to invite someone to come with you to church.

It is already clear that all Christians are going to have to be more effective witnesses to the redemptive truth and power of the Gospel, in a world that is increasingly at odds with it. No longer can we assume good-will or understanding; nor can we rest on a privilege and an influence that have long-since ceased to exist. The institutional Church undoubtedly has its problems, but it is to the local, and to personal connections, that people relate; a silly pronouncement by a Bishop is usually mitigated by people being a part of, or

knowing about, a serious, welcoming, and compassionate church community, such as our own.

And, thirdly, be joyful: take delight in your faith, and in the knowledge that you are a beloved child of God, and are saved by his grace. Why wouldn't we want to communicate the hope and consolation of the Gospel to others if it has sufficiently transformed our understanding of God, ourselves, this world and the next, that it brings us inner peace and joy? Of course, that doesn't mean that there won't be times of sadness, disappointment and struggle in our lives – there will; rather, it is precisely in those times of trial that we must draw upon that inner wellspring of hope and joy, knowing that sometimes all we can do is trust, and allow God to be the strength in our weakness. Joy in the Spirit is one of the most effective tools for evangelisation: joy, and the hope from which it springs, are infectious, and can often communicate the Faith more profoundly than words. As S. Francis of Assisi said, 'Preach the Gospel always: use words when necessary'. Our actions and attitudes matter, and have the power to attract or repel; just as they not only speak to our own motivations, but also project an image of the Lord whom we proclaim and serve, for good or for ill. We can do none of these things in our own strength, but only by the power of the grace that we receive at the Altar – the place where all mission begins and ends. And if we were more faithful to Jesus in his sacramental presence, then we might be more effective witnesses to his Gospel. Amen.