

## OUR CALL TO MISSION

The readings that we have heard proclaimed in this liturgy each focus on the love of God. They allow us to reflect on our belief as to whether we believe that God really loves and cares for us. Do we trust that God will be with us and for us, even in the midst of the darkest moments of our lives? The God revealed in the Bible is always with us and for us.

### EXODUS

The first reading is taken from the Book of Exodus. The people have just arrived at the base of Mount Sinai. The people are about to enter into a covenant with God. God reminds the people that He set them free from Egypt. God tells the people that if they obey His voice and keep His covenant they will be His special possession out of all of the people of the world. It seems ludicrous to think that this small people who are in search of a homeland could think that they are God's special people and yet that is how they understand themselves and God's relationship with them. They are a displaced people who had been set free from a much more powerful nation. In their journey to the Promised Land they show themselves to lack faith in God's love and protection. In spite of their lack of faith God continues to journey with His people and to protect them.

God reminds the people that the whole earth is His, but that they shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. God is saying that just as priests are holy among the people so the Israelites are holy among the nations.

### PSALM 100

Palm 100 continues this theme of God's love for His people. This psalm was composed as a call for Israel to worship God in the Jerusalem temple. It is permeated by a strong sense of God's loving care for his people as "the flock he tends." It affirms that the Lord is good and his love endures forever. The God worshiped at the Temple loves and cares for his people.

## ROMANS

In his letter to the Romans Paul reflects on how Jesus in his life, death and resurrection made manifest God's love and care for humankind. According to Paul the greatest proof of God's love and care for us was Jesus' willingness to die on behalf of sinful humankind and to make possible a new and better relationship with God. Paul insists that the paschal mystery have made available the benefits of justification, reconciliation and salvation to each and every person.

Paul writes that Jesus died for the godless. We have a duty as Christians to share our faith with those who do not know the love of God.

## MATTHEW 9:36-10:8

As the Gospel opens Jesus looks out over the crowd of people and is moved with pity. Jesus tells his followers that the people are like sheep without a shepherd. The crowd is harassed and torn apart. The religious and political leaders have not provided true leadership for the people. Jesus shows compassion toward his people and wishes to serve as their shepherd. The sight of the crowd leaves Jesus to think about a mission by his disciples. Jesus himself is the true shepherd of Israel. He desires his disciples to act as shepherds of his people in his place and after his manner. Even in this depressing scene Jesus intuits the possibility for a great harvest. Jesus declares that the mission of his disciples, bringing the good news to others and gathering believers into his community, is part of the eschatological event. The mission helps to set the final eschatological drama in motion. The disciples are to pray that laborers will be provided. He asks that the disciples pray that God, the Master of the Harvest, send out laborers to take in the harvest. The harvest is a symbol for the close of the age. At the end of the ages all peoples would be gathered together for judgment. The "workers" are to help people prepare for the harvest.

In chapters 8 and 9 Jesus has shown His power. Now He gives that same power to the disciples. Jesus then chooses the twelve apostles and sends them out on mission. There is continuity between the actions of Jesus and the actions of the apostles. The disciples are given gifts from the Holy Spirit and they are to use the gifts freely in imitation of Jesus.

Jesus is clear that in this ministry during the life of Jesus the apostles are sent only to the people of Israel. Once Jesus dies the apostles will be sent out to the ends of the earth in order to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people. We share in the same ministry to all the nations as did he apostles.

The apostles are to proclaim that “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” They are commanded to “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons”.

Jesus tells the apostles that as they have been given without cost so they are to give without cost. The disciples are to give freely as God has freely given to them. Jesus gives these words to us as well. God freely shares his love with us. How well do we share that love with others. God has forgiven our sins through his cross and continually forgives our sins each day. How well do we forgive others? God has freely given his word of salvation. How well do we share this word with others? We have been given of the Holy Spirit and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are to build up this church community and to share our faith through the use of spiritual gifts. How well do we use our gifts in our efforts to share our faith with others?

The reading reminds us that the church is a community always in mission, confronting with compassion those who suffer the evils of the world.

#### FATHER’S DAY CHALLENGE

Today we celebrate Father’s Day. Today’s Gospel reminds us that the teaching about which the Gospel speaks must begin in the home. As Catholics we refer to the home as the domestic church. As we celebrate Father’s Day I challenge our to live out this Gospel not only by taking the Good News of Jesus outside of the home but that the Gospel begin in the home.

At times Father’s often find themselves outside of the home. Many fathers are outside of the home in order to raise enough money to support the family. Certainly this is important and even heroic. This may sometimes lead the mother to be the sole teacher within the family. In some families the mother is given the role of sole teacher in the faith. I challenge fathers to see the role that they have as teachers within their families.

I am not saying that the father should teach alone but instead that the mother and father together have a role of the passing on the faith to children.

Fathers cannot pass on what they do not have. I challenge fathers to grow in faith. This may come through spiritual reading. I suggest that parents attend Greco courses within the parish that they may grow in faith.

I suggest that fathers take time to pray with their families.

I suggest that fathers become involved in parish ministries. JGS has a variety of adult faith formation classes and outreach ministries. These offer good opportunities for couples to grow in faith together and to live their faith together.

Finally it is important to remember on Father's Day that fathers teach in direct and indirect ways. Children hear the words of parents and see their actions. They see the relationship between a mother and father. These experiences help children to grow and develop. How do you teach your children both through the lessons you teach but also through your actions.

These lessons are not only for fathers but also for grandfathers as well. While grandfathers may not have as central a role in teaching as do fathers the words and actions of grandfathers are very important in shaping children and helping them grow into loving adults.

This is a day of giving thanks for our fathers. It is a day of giving thanks for our fathers both living and dead. I know my father and grandfathers look down on us from heaven as we celebrate this Mass. Let us tell our fathers how much they mean to us.

May we give thanks to our fathers for their love and sacrifice.