

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time-Lectionary: 91

Reading 1-[Exodus 19:2-6a](#)

In those days, the Israelites came to the desert of Sinai and pitched camp. While Israel was encamped here in front of the mountain, Moses went up the mountain to God. Then the LORD called to him and said, “Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob; tell the Israelites: 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. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.”

Responsorial Psalm-[Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5](#) R. (3c) We are his people: the sheep of his flock.

Reading 2-[Romans 5:6-11](#)

Brothers and sisters: Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But 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. Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life. Not only that, but we also boast of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Gospel-[Matthew 9:36—10:8](#)

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. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.” Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness. The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; Simon from Cana, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him. Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, “Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. 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.”

From Mass to Mission: Understanding “Ite, Missa Est”



‘Ite Missa Est’ - "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life."

Living Eucharistic Lives

Summary

The liturgical and scriptural selections for the Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time center on the transition from communal worship to global mission. The core theme is the "theology of mission," encapsulated in the concluding words of the Mass, *Ite, missa est*. Often misunderstood as a simple signal of conclusion, this dismissal is a commissioning—an urgent call for the faithful to live out their identity as missionary disciples. In a contemporary context where faith is often neither "evident" nor "comfortable," the message of the dismissal is increasingly relevant. Participation in the Eucharist is not a "parenthesis" in an otherwise secular life; it is the source of strength for a "missionary identity." The call of the dismissal is to "become what you touch"—to receive Christ in Communion and then "be Christ for others." This requires courage, formation, and a coherence of life where every action, no matter how small, is contextualized by the believer's identity as priest, prophet, and king. As the Father sent the Son, the dismissal ensures that the faithful are sent into "all the world" to "proclaim the good news to the whole creation."

Homily

You've heard the words every time you've participated in the Mass, they sound solemn. And yet you might not have been listening for the meaning of those words, at least not beyond a religious way of saying 'we're done here, you can go now'. If you heard the ancient Latin form, 'Ite, missa est', the solemn and mysterious sound might cause you to pause and wonder. As brief as these words are, they are powerful and if you're still being present to the celebration and not halfway to your car in your mind, even captivating. They are meant to speak to us of a profound theology of mission, an urgent call to live the Gospel. The readings and this homily invite you to pause, contemplate, and rediscover everything 'Ite, missa est' means. Because if we truly understand these words, it changes how we live our faith. Words matter. Words have power. Words heard repetitively form how we think about that to which they refer.

At the end of Mass, the Priest says ‘Ite, missa est’ or more commonly today, ‘go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life’. There are also 3 other versions of this that a Priest could choose from for the rite of dismissal. They are: “Go forth, the Mass is ended”; “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord”; “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life”; and “Go in peace.” These words of dismissal are meant to put us in direct connection to our identity in Christ, first and foremost as missionary disciples. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal states that the dismissal is not a closure but “*an exhortation that the faithful live out what they have celebrated.*” Pope Benedict XVI even explained that from this phrase the very term “Mass” is derived: “*The word missa has been consolidated over time as the proper name for the entire liturgical action, because the mission begins at the end of the rite.*”¹

The use of the phrase ‘Ite, missa est’ is documented from the 4th century, at a time when the Church already understood the liturgy was not an isolated event but was / is in fact the heart of Christian life. Unfortunately, the power and clarity of those ancient words of dismissal have been variously translated and not at all well. For instance, they have been translated as “Go, the Mass is ended.” However, this translation doesn’t really capture the fullness of the meaning intended by the original Latin words of the rite. This first option doesn’t fully capture what is intended by the original Latin words but rather emphasize *conclusion*—marking the temporal boundary of a liturgical event. The English phrasing prioritizes what has finished rather than what begins. Though they aren’t inaccurate, these words shift our focus from the *sending* dimension to the *closing* dimension, potentially muting the apostolic resonance that the dismissal was meant to clarify as an essential dimension of the Church’s life and our identity.

The original Latin term *missa* derives from the Latin noun ‘*missio*’ meaning “mission,” which is itself rooted in the Latin verb ‘*mittere*’ meaning “to send/let go”. So the dismissal formula carries the sense of sending the community forth with a specific evangelical charge, a commissioning, rather than simply an end. As well, it honors the apostolic understanding especially as regards the great commission. The Apostles in that moment understood that their commission was to be a perpetual work, not confined to specific moments.² The Latin *ite missa est* preserves this sense—each dismissal renews the missionary mandate. The congregation isn’t merely released from obligation but sent into the mission field. Therefore, a more faithful translation would be: “Go, you are sent.” Since the earliest centuries of Christianity, this formula marked not just the conclusion of the Eucharistic sacrifice, but the projection of Christian life into the world. The people of God, nourished by the Word and the Eucharist, are not dismissed so much they are sent out to continue living well their missionary identity, participating in the work of the salvation of the world. If the Latin language of the Church is less understood by the faithful today, we can still say with confidence that when we hear these words, “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life”, they clearly safeguard the relationship between the Mass celebrated and the mission lived.

The readings today give us highlights from our salvation history that help us to understand how we came to possess this identity and responsibility. In the Gospel Jesus has invited from among his disciples some to become the first apostles and commissions them for their first missionary trip, acting with his authority. Jesus’s heart, moved with pity for His people who were “*like sheep without a shepherd*”, longed to gather his “*lost sheep of the house of Israel*”, and once again be their shepherd. But because he is participating in the unfolding of salvation history with a view to the progressive presence of the Kingdom of God, and the advent of the Church, Christ begins to share his mission, sending out the Twelve Apostles as his co-workers, shepherds or pastors for his people.

¹ Sacramentum Caritatis, n. 51

² Matthew 28:19-20

In the second reading we are made to understand how we become able to share so directly in the mission of God for the salvation of the world. God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us... now, justified by his blood, we are saved through him. He offered us mercy, despite the sins we committed against Him, and gave us the gift of eternal life through His death on the cross. We should have an even greater confidence and trust in the Lord and in His love for us now that we are redeemed by the waters of Baptism and offered forgiveness from our sins through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This speaks to our having been drawn into the divine life of our Triune God.

Although the Psalm speaks of God's chosen people Israel, in consideration of the unfolding of what is the universal nature of the mission of Christ, it shares its meaning with us as adopted children of God, incorporated into Christ through baptism, we too are his people, sheep of his flock. This Psalm highlights the Lord's tenderness for humanity as he seeks to know and care for us as, a shepherd cares for his sheep. As the sheep of the Divine Shepherd, we are called to be faithful and follow the Lord in all things. While we remain sheep in Christ's flock, we also become shepherds in the fields of harvest.

In our first reading, God speaks to his people at Mt. Sinai, *"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. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation."* This promise first and foremost concerns Israel's formation as God's chosen people, not yet the Church, sacramental priesthood or the priesthood of the faithful. The universal priesthood remained an as yet unfulfilled promise, awaiting the new and eternal covenant in Christ.

The connection to the Church emerges through God's revelation in the new and eternal covenant which further reveals God's plan of salvation unfolding in history prior to the incarnation of Jesus. St. Peter deliberately echoes the Exodus covenant when addressing Christian converts, comparing the new community to Israel and applying the *"kingdom of priests"* language to all believers. Through Christ's sacrificial blood, all believers gain access to God's sanctuary and participate in the priesthood of Jesus, the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. In the Church, the sacrament of Chrism establishes all baptized persons on equal priestly footing through sanctifying grace, though some are subsequently appointed as bishops and presbyters for functional ministry. St. Josemaría Escrivá gives a guide to living out the priesthood of the faithful aspect of this identity when he says; *"Sanctify your work, sanctify yourself in your work, and sanctify others through your work."* We are sent to live the priesthood of the faithful through sanctifying even the most mundane moments of life. We should always be asking ourselves how we are living our identity as priests, prophets, and kings in the living of our missionary lives. Pope Paul VI's 1975 apostolic letter reasserted that proclaiming the Gospel *"is the duty incumbent on her [the Church] by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved"*.

*"As the Father has sent me, so I send you".*³ The Mass is our participation in that sending. The Eucharist we celebrate is not a parenthesis in midst of our otherwise secular daily life, something "spiritual" that has no direct connection with the daily living of a disciple. At its conclusion, we do not return to "normal life," but we are reaffirmed, renewed, strengthened by grace in our identity as others Christ sent into the world. It is not enough to receive Christ in Communion. We must be Christ for others. Become what you touch. We don't accept a mission as though we were Ethan Hunt in 'Mission Impossible', as St. Paul said, *"The love of Christ urges us on"*, because we are the members of Christ's mystical body the Church!⁴

³ John 20:21

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:14

We live in times where faith is no longer evident or comfortable. Being Catholic today requires courage, formation, and coherence. That's why now more than ever, the message of 'Ite, missa est' is relevant.

“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation”⁵

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Apostle	Derived from the twelve disciples summoned by Jesus; those sent out with authority to preach the Kingdom of Heaven and perform healings.
Covenant	A solemn agreement between God and His people, such as the one established at Mt. Sinai where Israel became God's "special possession."
Dismissal	The final rite of the Mass; intended as an exhortation for the faithful to live out what they have celebrated rather than a simple conclusion.
GIRM	The General Instruction of the Roman Missal; the document that provides the theological and rubrical framework for the celebration of the Mass.
Ite, missa est	The ancient Latin dismissal formula meaning "Go, you are sent," from which the word "Mass" is derived.
Justification	The process by which believers are made right with God through the blood of Christ, moving from a state of enmity to reconciliation.
Kingdom of Priests	A term used in Exodus and echoed by St. Peter to describe the collective identity of God's people as holy and dedicated to His service.
Lectionary	The ordered system of scriptural readings used during the Mass; the source context refers to Lectionary: 91.
Missa / Missio	Latin roots meaning "mission" or "to send," forming the etymological basis for the term "Mass."
Priesthood of the Faithful	The participation of all baptized persons in the priesthood of Christ, calling them to sanctify the world through their daily lives and work.
Sacrament of Reconciliation	A source of forgiveness for sins committed after Baptism, offering the mercy proved by Christ's death on the cross.
Sanctification	The act of making something holy; in the context of the faithful, it refers to making one's work and life an offering to God.

⁵ Mark 16:15