

The Mission of the Twelve Apostles (11th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Exodus 19:2-6—A Kingdom of Priests, a Holy Nation

1. Israel = “twelve tribes” (19:1; cf. Exod 24:4)
2. Sinai Covenant: God brings Israel to Mount Sinai to make a “covenant” (19:1-2, 5)
3. Priests: “a kingdom of priests” (19:6)
4. Holy: a “holy” (Hebrew *qadosh*) nation (19:7)

Psalm 100—The People of God

1. People: “we are his people” the “flock” of God (100:1-3)

Matthew 9:36-10:8—Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

1. Flock: people were like “sheep without a shepherd” (9:36)
2. Laborers: “harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (9:37)
3. Twelve Students: his “twelve disciples” (Greek *mathētēs*) (10:1)
4. Authority: over “unclean spirits” and to “heal” (10:1)
5. The Twelve: names given; Peter always first, Judas always last (10:2-4)
6. Mission: “lost sheep of Israel,” not Gentiles or Samaritans (10:5; cf. Rom 1:16)
7. Kingdom: “the kingdom of heaven” is “at hand” (10:7)

The Living Tradition

St. Thomas Aquinas: Why does it say “twelve”? That the conformity of the New and Old Testament might be shown, because in the Old, there were twelve patriarchs, and these are likewise twelve. (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Matthew* no. 810)

St. Thomas Aquinas: Why does he say, “do not go into the way of the Gentiles?” One should say that they were sent to both, because *first they were sent to the Jews*... Wishing to lead the faithful into the faith of the fathers, he wished first that the faith should be preached to the Jews... (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Matthew* no. 815)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (11th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. What would a first-century Jew have thought about Jesus gathering “the Twelve” disciples around him? If the Twelve disciples are like the new patriarchs, then what does the existence of the Twelve imply about who Jesus *himself* is claiming to be?

For Further Reading

1. Mitch, Curtis and Edward Sri. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010.
2. Aquinas, Thomas. *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*. 2 vols. Translated by Jeremy Holmes and Beth Mortensen. Lander: Aquinas Institute, 2013.
3. Simonetti, Manlio, *Matthew*. 2 volumes. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, Ia-Ib. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2001, 2002.
4. Theophylact. *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Matthew*. Translated by Christopher Stade. House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 2014.