

Rev. Toan Do
Exodus 19:2-6a
Romans 5:6-11
Matthew 9:36 - 10:8

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
EPIPHANY CATHOLIC CHURCH
Louisville, KY, USA
June 14, 2026

I am sure we are familiar with the saying that Jesus knows everything and Jesus is everything.

Back in 2000 and 2006, two years after my ordination as a priest and two years spent as an associate at St. Joseph Proto-Cathedral in Bardstown, the late Archbishop Kelly decided to send me back for further studies in scripture. So, first I asked Archbishop Kelly: "I've spent four years learning Koine Greek, New Testament Greek, but I'd like to learn classical Greek." He said. "Where would you like to go?" I said one place that has a 12-week intensive program is at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City. Of course, that is where he came from. He's from Rhode Island. I believe he knew the area very well, also because of his background as a Dominican preacher and priest. He sent me to stay and live at one of the Dominican parishes, St. Joseph, in New York City, right by New York University. That summer, there was another Dominican novice who was probably in his late thirties who had just left practicing law in Chicago as a lawyer for a number of years, and he seemed very, very successful. He was drawn to the Dominican lifestyle, preaching, and priesthood, and so on. He was a young novice, and I was also young in my priesthood. One day in the summer, we happened to talk about Jesus at one of our Saturday-morning coffee-table gatherings. We talked about whether Jesus knew everything. For him, Jesus knew everything. I said, of course, to some extent, yes, but never forget the fact of what the church proclaimed as early as the late second century. I'm not saying the first century, the late second century, all the way until now, through our Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed. We proclaim that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. There is a reason for that very loaded statement, being a human being. The question is, could Jesus have known everything? Of course, we had a long debate; it lasted for over an hour, drinking coffee after coffee. Of course, neither of us agreed in the end. To this day, I still say to myself that, especially from today's gospel reading, we learn about the human side of Jesus. The fact that Jesus tells His disciples, "The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few."

As the master, the better translation is asking God, the Lord of the harvest, to send out laborers for His harvest. Jesus said this because He knew well that the harvest, you all, the world, humanity, all belong not to Jesus, but to God. Of course, the statement that Jesus knows everything is true; today, we can say that, but not in Jesus' time. Not in the time in which Jesus was walking and doing ministry. Why? Because He knew well that the Kingdom of God did not belong to Him, but to God the Father Himself. Why? Also, we see that Jesus named or chose these twelve Apostles, six pairs each. Beginning with Simon Peter and ending with Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Jesus. That line, the very line itself, is from Matthew, who wrote about the story in the time of the late twenties, or say the year thirty, in which Jesus chose His disciples. The question is, did Jesus know that Judas Iscariot was going to betray him?

We can say that Jesus knew everything now because He is with God. He is now our God in One Unity with the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son. But as fully human, we have to leave doubt for Jesus to be who he was: fully God and fully human. That said, let us presume that Jesus did not know Judas would betray Him. The fact that Jesus asked His disciples or charged them to ask God to send out laborers for the harvest, because the work of salvation is so much, so vast that Jesus, Himself, knew He could not have done it all. How and why? Because Jesus, also like us, relied on God to do the rest of the work of salvation for humanity.

In the first reading today from the Book of Exodus, we are reminded that those who listen to the voice of God shall be called special in God's own way. By saying that, let's say the author here is Moses. Presumably, Moses knew well that God is the one who drives the hearts of human beings. For us here, Christians and Catholics, we are drawn toward God through Jesus. That is why in the second reading today from Paul's letter to the Romans, Paul knew well as Gentile Christians the most important, the best, and the only way for Gentile Christians having not known who God was before Jesus, the only way for them to be saved was through Jesus Himself. Back to the question, Jesus, for example, we may want to say that Jesus knew everything, and if it were today, would Jesus have known anything about technology, computers in the 21st century, AI, for example? That would be anachronistically unrealistic and not true. Jesus lived, the human Jesus lived in the first century. We must allow Jesus to be who He was, choosing disciples. Twelve of them, six pairs each, one of them was not so perfect, but still there because of the will of God; there was so much work for salvation out there for them to do the work besides Jesus Himself. For all of us, this reading, especially the gospel today, I think it teaches us so much. We can rely on ourselves not only as human beings, flawed as we are, but we can also rely on the grace, mercy, and wisdom of the Spirit to drive us forward. We see among these twelve

disciples, Judas, no one wanted to be Judas, but I believe that we can all relate to both, all of them from the top of the list to the bottom of the list of the twelve, from Peter, the first one, to Judas, the last one. Someday, we can act like Peter, to be the best of who we are. Still failed when he was asked about himself and his relation to Jesus, but also as the last and least of the twelve, Judas, who betrayed Jesus. Knowing these are human beings, they are like Him. Jesus chose them not to be perfect, but to do the will of God, to do what is out there, harvest, to bring in people to believe in God. The question we may want to ask. Could Judas or did Judas do the work that Jesus asked him, even though at the end he failed and betrayed Him? I believe so. The gospel today seems to imply that even the least one among the twelve, Judas, could have done and did in fact do miraculous things.

Do not go into the pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you make this proclamation, the Kingdom of Heaven is right here near your heart. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and drive out demons. Imperfect human beings can do miracle things. We are called, my brothers and sisters, to do just that and do great things in our own weakness, in our own failure. God, and today the Risen Jesus, the Risen Son of God, accompanies us every step of our journey.