

Rev. Emmanuel-Garet Ifeakor
Exodus 19:2-6a
Romans 5:6-11
Matthew 9:36 -10:8

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
EPIPHANY CATHOLIC CHURCH
Louisville, KY, USA
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Theme: Jesus was moved with compassion.

Jesus was moved with compassion. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, how often do we feel sorry when we see a pitiable situation? I think it is part of our humanity to express our apologies. Even though some people don't do that, it is in our humanity to feel or express sorrow. When we see situations that are unbearable or pitiable, we feel sorry. Today, Jesus was moved with compassion. The compassion we want to talk about today is not 'compassion' or a feeling that ends with feeling sorry for someone's misfortune. It is not 'compassion' or a feeling that ends with seeing. It is not "compassion" or a feeling that ends with hearing. Maybe you heard about another person's unbearable situation and stopped at the level of hearing. Rather, we would like to talk about a compassion that goes beyond those. First of all, Jesus's act of showing compassion or pity always comes from His heart. Thus, today's gospel reading begins "At the sight of the crowds, Jesus' heart was moved with pity (compassion) for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus' heart was moved with compassion. You know, many of us live with our heads. At times, we don't live with our hearts and tend to forget that it is our hearts that make us human. When you don't live with your heart, you tend to live with your head. When you tend to live with your head, you will always be moved by your head and not by your heart. That is why we used to say, "Sacred Heart of Jesus. Make our hearts like unto yours". We want to live with our hearts. We don't want to live with our heads.

Having said this, what is compassion in the true sense of what Jesus did? He was moved with compassion. Compassion is a sympathetic consciousness of someone's suffering, misfortune, hardship, tribulations, or distress. This is the first stage of compassion. You were moved. This is on the level of awareness. There was a concern for this person. There was an awareness of this person's tribulation and suffering. That is the first stage of what Jesus did today. At times, so many of us would stop here. Oh, you only felt sorry and moved away. The second stage of the

compassion of Jesus is the desire to alleviate or make better the unbearable situations of others. Therefore, he had the desire to help. That is the second stage of true compassion. It is not enough to see people distressed. It is not enough to see people in their difficulty. Do you have the desire to offer help? However, it doesn't stop there. The third stage is that you have to translate the desire into action. In this sense, true compassion is defined as the sympathetic consciousness of other people's misfortune, distress, or difficulty, together with a desire to alleviate it, accompanied by the actual alleviation. Therefore, the three stages of compassion of Jesus are: He was moved with pity or compassion, seeing people suffering or in situations that were unbearable. Then the second stage is the desire to help, and the third stage is to translate your desire into action. These are what played out today. Compassion is not just emotional but leads to action. This is empathy in action. Now, we recall the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. A man was attacked by brigands/robbers on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. A priest passed by and was perhaps moved with "compassion" but did not have the desire to assist or assist the man. Like some would say, Oh, sorry! Oh, who did this to you? He left. He did not act. A Levite also passed by and did not care to assist. The third person, named a good Samaritan, showed up. He saw the man lying on the ground. He was moved with true compassion. He had the desire to help, and he did help out. He went to the man and bandaged the wound. He poured oil on the wound of the man. Then he put the man on his own donkey. He took the man to the hospital. You see the stages of true compassion playing out. He told the doctors or the nurses, "Look after him, and when I return, I will reimburse you for the extra expenses you may have," Cf. Luke 10: 25-37. You also recall that in Matthew Chapter 15, Jesus was teaching people. Those guys, like you guys here listening to the Word of God, were with Jesus for three days and ate nothing. Jesus was moved with compassion and pity for them because they were hungry. Jesus didn't want to leave them to go away hungry. It was here that Jesus fed the people with seven loaves of bread and five fish. He saw them hungry. It didn't end there. He had a desire to help them, and He fed them.

My dear people of God, in the first reading, Moses had to remind the people of the compassion of God. How God brought them on eagles' wings when they were in the desert. They were dehydrated in the desert. They had no food. They were treading on their bare feet. God intervened, and they were brought into the land He promised to give them. In the second reading, out of His love and compassion, Jesus Christ died for you and for me, even when we are still sinners. At times, we disassociate ourselves from those who are sinners. But Jesus Christ did not disassociate Himself from us but died for us out of His compassion. He took the courage to come and die for you and for me. My dear people of God, one of the core values that everybody reads today, those who were here when we began the

Mass of Epiphany, is “We choose to live the gospel of Jesus Christ with humility and compassion”. Today is our birthday, 55 years of the existence of our parish. So many of you here today were here when this parish began. Last night, we had a little celebration. Some people were telling me that they were among the founding members when the first Holy Mass was celebrated at the gym in Owl Creek. Now, it's not enough to say or write it. But doing it is another thing. And that is where we can learn from the compassion of Jesus. In this aspect, Epiphany is particularly unique in our social responsibility. This is one of the ministries we have here that so many parishes in Louisville do not have: the Social Responsibility ministry. Through this ministry, Epiphany has shown true compassion to people. However, you are going to ask yourself, and I am going to ask myself, "If this is our core value, how far do we live it out like Jesus? How far have I been compassionate like Jesus?" Remember the three stages of true compassion. First, you have to show compassion by being sympathetic. Number two, there will be a desire to help out. Number three, you have to act. It is beyond emotional reaction. You have to translate it into action, and that's what Jesus did in the gospel reading today. The people were troubled and abandoned like sheep without a shepherd. He, therefore, summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness. His compassion was translated into action. In this Mass, may we ask God to give us the strength always to go beyond feeling sorry for seeing people's suffering and the grace to desire to offer help and to translate the desire into action. Jesus was moved with compassion.