

8 July 2026 - Wednesday of the 14<sup>th</sup> week in Ordinary Time

Hos 10:1-3, 7-8, 12; Matthew 10:1-7

### Homily

The rabbis of Jesus' time surrounded themselves with a few disciples, with whom they lived in a school or on the outskirts of a town. Jesus chose a completely different style. He was an itinerant rabbi who did not wait for the disciples to come to him, but rather went out to meet them. He did not teach his disciples through long speeches, but simply involved them in his missionary journeys and sent them out on mission too. He did not follow in the footsteps of the priests of his time (preoccupied with sacrifices and the people's money) and even less in the footsteps of the Pharisees (a haughty elite), but rather in the footsteps of the great prophets and, beyond them, in the footsteps of Moses himself.

The Evangelist Matthew does not describe the institution of the Twelve. In his Gospel, instead of this institution, we find the "beatitudes" in which Jesus establishes the Law of the New Covenant and by which he consequently founds his Church, the new Israel. The text first speaks of the "twelve disciples", who are mentioned here for the first time and who represent the People of Israel as a whole, made up of twelve tribes. To this people, represented by the twelve, he gives the power to do all that he himself did: to expel evil spirits and to heal from every disease and infirmity. The text then goes on to call these twelve disciples **apostles**. The mission we are talking about here is a mission entrusted to the whole of his new people, to his Church, to all of us. We are all called to have the same compassion as he did.

These twelve disciples - or twelve apostles - whom Jesus chose to send on his mission are as motley a group as you can imagine. First there was Simon, called Peter, and his brother Andrew, then James and his brother John.

Of the other seven we know almost nothing (if we exclude what is told in the apocryphal Gospels or other late accounts of the same kind). And the list ends with the one who is going to deliver him.

If we had been in Jesus' shoes, we would no doubt have chosen better-prepared collaborators and made sure they had everything they needed to carry out such a difficult task as driving out evil spirits! Jesus chose a motley crew, he chose all of us, knowing full well that, like Moses with his people, he would have great difficulty in making his immediate disciples, and even more so all of us, understand the

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meaning of his mission, which is rooted in *compassion* for those who suffer and lack direction.

We know our limits and our weaknesses; but the mission entrusted to us is greater than we are. The One who entrusted it to us is always there to comfort and nourish us, as he will do in this Eucharist.

And let's not forget the last little phrase of our Gospel, which reminds us that everything we are and have received, we have received freely. It is therefore freely that we must accomplish our mission as Christians, knowing that this vocation to the Gospel is not a privilege that we should preserve, but a grace to be shared.

\* And we celebrate today the memorial of Pope Eugenio III of the Cistercian Order.

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