**2ND SUNDAY after PENTECOST SERMON**

For many days, we have heard, read or seen protest rallies in many, many cities of the country, some turning violent and deadly, which were sparked by a disturbing video capture of a black man George Floyd detained by a white police officer kneeling on his neck till life was crushed from him. It was not just this and other similar tragic scenes, but also the frightening memories it resurrected of other black lives: of men, young, fathers, grandfathers, ancestors that were lost in such heart-breaking ways.

Consider all these against the still raging corona virus pandemic that brought along its wake: sicknesses, deaths, unemployment, poverty, hunger, lock downs, anxieties, frustrations … you name it.

In the Gospel today, Jesus saw a similar situation. *35As Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching, proclaiming the good news and healing every disease and sickness, He saw the crowds who were like frightened and helpless sheep abandoned by their shepherd. He saw the crowds like a vast field ready for the harvest. But there were few laborers to do the harvest.*

And the Gospel says that *36When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them!”*

I would like to reflect with you briefly on this compassion that moved the heart of Jesus looking at the situation of the crowds – the same kind of compassion that should move our hearts looking at our sad and heart-breaking situation of racial unrest and the corona virus pandemic crisis.

What does COMPASSION mean in simple terms? A little story may put illustrate this compassion of Jesus: *Our story is about a father who had a disobedient son. The boy constantly disobeyed the family rules. The father told his son that if he disobeyed one more time, he would send him to the attic, without dinner. Well, he disobeyed again and the father ordered the boy upstairs. The father then became quiet. His wife said to him, "I know what you are thinking. But you must not bring him down from the attic. It would cause him to keep disobeying." He knew that his wife was right, but the father couldn't eat, thinking about his son. Finally, he grabbed a blanket and a little bit more bread and glass of milk. He joined his son and spent the night with him in the attic.*

This is compassion – *cum patire* – to suffer with = to sleep in the attic with and to eat bread and drink milk with. There are many times that this compassion of Jesus is shown in the gospels: Jesus was moved to compassion when he **saw** the sick (14:14), the blind (20:34), those gripped by demons (Mark 9:22), the mother at Nain whose son had died (Luke 7:13), when Jesus saw the hungry crowd of 4,000 people to be fed (15:32).

Going back to our reading, when Jesus **saw** the situation, the first thing Jesus did was to ask his disciples to pray: 38Ask the Lord of the harvest, to send

out workers into his harvest.” This is also the first thing we need to do when we see the urgent and felt needs of our situation: **PRAY!**

But as the Gospel today continues, Jesus’ compassion did not stop in prayer. His compassion is translated to action. He called the twelve. He entrusted to them the mission of proclaiming the good news and to heal the sick and drive out demons. Jesus taught How: how to move from proclamation to acts of compassion; from Words to Actions.

That was the way it was originally and that is still the way today. Jesus is sent by the Father with blanket, bread and milk to sleep with us in the attic. In turn he sends his disciples to continue his mission.

This is the transition from **DISCIPLESHIP** to **APOSTLESHIP**. A discipulus – a learner, student to become an Apostolus – one sent with a message. From being evangelized to becoming an evangelizer. From **minister** to **missionary**.

I hope that we will remember this distinction and this transition. This is the DISTINCTION: **Ministry** is when we build and nurture the inner life of the Church; **Mission** is when we share this life of the Church to others. But this is the TRANSITION when we put into practice the words of Jesus who said: *as the Father has sent me, I also send you*”. So, Jesus needs us, our willing hands, willing hearts, willing minds and willing spirits.

And where are we sent to? First as Jesus says: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 Remember what Jesus said to the disciples before his ascension: *You will be my witness beginning from Jerusalem, then Judea and Samaria, and then to the ends of the Earth.*”

This is the **first principle of mission**: the lost sheep of Israel. In our case, our first principle points to the lost, the absent and the lukewarm in our Church family. But while this is a first principle, it is not an exclusive principle: What is meant here is what an age-old saying states: *Charity begins at home but it does not end there.*

This is what happened in the NT when Jesus called and commissioned the 12 apostles (and us) to build up the new people of God in order to share the blessings of God’s Kingdom to others. This is our mission of evangelism: to reach out to, using the gospel language, to the other sheep who are not of this fold.

To us: during this time of the corona virus pandemic crisis and the racial unrest: Let our compassion be to members of our Church family, especially those in need and lonely. Please reach out to one another: a call, a text, a card, a visit if okay, an errand, etc. However, let our compassion go out to the larger community – the sick, the discriminated, the hungry, the grieving, the troubled, the neglected and the forgotten. Let our first and continuing response be PRAYER. Let our next and continuing response too be ACTS OF COMPASSION. Amen