FR. GARY'S CORNER

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In the first reading from Exodus, God speaks to the Israelites and says, *"if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession."* God reveals a special calling for the children of Jacob, the Jews. God makes of them a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.

God chose Israel for a purpose, to offer sacrifice and to be a witness and a herald to the world of the one true God. But the sacrifices of Israel and the faith of the Jews was all in preparation for something even greater. What the Old Testament foreshadowed, was fulfilled in Jesus. For He is the true Lamb of God, the only Sacrifice which brings salvation. The plan of God proclaimed by the children of Jacob was fulfilled in the Gospel, the "Good News" of Jesus Christ.

The second reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans states, *"Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly… Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life."* Thus, the Scriptures reveal to us the tender and merciful heart of God.

The Gospel passage for today states that *"at the sight of the crowds, Jesus' heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd."* Again, we see a divine heart that longs for the welfare of people and a desire that they be gathered under one divine Shepherd. Jesus goes on to say that *"The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."* Then the Gospel lists the names of the Apostles, the first ones who were sent.

The readings reveal the longing in God's heart for the salvation of people. He *"desires all to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth"* (1 Tim 2:4). But God invites. He proposes rather than imposes. He respects our freedom, He won't force our "yes".

Let us also long for the gift of salvation in Christ Jesus and so live in a manner pleasing to God, seeking His help to make choices that are in accord with His will and for our eternal good.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life,