

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In today's Gospel, we encounter a deeply moving image of Jesus looking out at the crowds. Saint Matthew tells us that our Lord's heart was moved with pity because the people were "troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd". Turning to His disciples, He delivers a profound truth that echoes across the centuries to us today: "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few". Jesus does not look at a broken world and despair; instead, He sees an absolute abundance of potential, waiting for willing hearts to step forward and gather it.

This divine mandate calls to mind another pivotal moment in the history of our faith. Centuries ago, a young man named Francis of Assisi sat praying before a crucifix in the dilapidated church of San Damiano. In the quiet of his heart, he heard the voice of Christ commission him with a direct, urgent task: "Francis, go and rebuild my Church, which, as you can see, is falling into ruin". While Francis initially thought this meant carrying physical stones, the Holy Spirit soon revealed a deeper reality. God was calling him to rebuild the living fabric of the Church through radical love, humility, and an unwavering commitment to the Gospel.

As our summer youth ministry begins, I extend this passionate call to our parish youth. My dear young friends, look around at our world. Just like the crowds in Matthew's Gospel, so many people your age are wandering, feeling anxious, isolated, and spiritually starved. They are looking for authenticity, meaning, and true hope. You are not merely the future of the Church; you are her vibrant present. The Church needs your energy, your passion, your unique talents, and your courageous witness right now.

Jesus is summoning you into this abundant harvest. Rebuilding the Church in our time does not mean waiting for someone else to take the lead. It means stepping up to lead right where you are—in your schools, your workplaces, your families, and your friendships. It means defending the vulnerable, speaking truth with kindness, and living out the Gospel with a radical boldness that mirrors Saint Francis.

Our Lord reminds us at the conclusion of today's reading: "Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give". You have been blessed with the gift of faith, the grace of the sacraments, and the love of a community. Do not let these gifts sit idle. Respond to the Master of the harvest with a generous and fearless "Yes". Let us step into the fields together and actively rebuild Church, the Body of Christ.

I look forward to joining all 12-17 year old teens at the Youth Group BBQ kickoff on July 12th, following the 11:00 AM Mass at Transfiguration Church. May God bless you, guide your steps, and fill you with the zeal of His Holy Spirit.

-Fr. Luke