Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



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Editor's note: *Welcome to Theologians' Corner, where each week a different woman theologian from around the world offers a fresh reflection on the Sunday readings.*



11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 14, 2026

Today's readings give us a glimpse into our theological anthropology — what we believe as Christians about the human person and our relationship with God. The very core of our being is that we are created in the image and likeness of God, the *imago Dei*.

In a special way among all of God's good creation, we as human beings bear God's image, which gives us our basic characteristics as good, beautiful, creative, loving, relational and rational creatures. As finite creatures reflecting the infinity of God, we

are also a diverse bunch, each sharing just a sliver of God's greatness. Even with all the incredible diversity among people in the world, the fullness of God's creative love is only echoed in human reality. This is truly awe-inspiring.

With that in mind, these words can only tap into a tiny portion of the wonders that God created in humanity. In the first reading (Exodus 19:2-6) we hear about the covenant of the Old Testament. God promises to be our God, and we are always God's people. God's faithful love and protection guide us, the "sheep of his flock."

Our relationship with God as Christians is even further explored in the reading from Paul's letter to the Romans (5:6-11). Not only does God protect us from external enemies, such as the Egyptians in the first reading, but also God protects us from our own sinfulness. Despite the image and likeness of God in us, we are not perfect and so we cause harm to ourselves and others. In our sinfulness, we separate ourselves from God. God protects us even from ourselves with his infinite care, *by loving us even to the death of God's own Son*. God's love is so abundant that God will suffer for us, to reclaim our close relationship as God's chosen ones, God's children.

With this strong foundation that expresses the incredible love God has for us, the readings for today turn to our call to respond to that love (Matthew 9:36-10:8). Jesus is for us an example to emulate. We are loved by God infinitely, and God calls us to love others to the limit of our human capacity. While we rarely focus on his emotions, today's Gospel reading shows that Jesus is "moved with pity" for the people. Jesus speaks of the need he sees in the world, people who were "troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd." And so, Jesus empowers his followers and sends them out to tend to the needs of the people.

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What would Jesus say the world needs today? Probably it wouldn't be much different from what he saw 2,000 years ago. Human beings haven't changed that much. Some of our needs are concrete, like food, clothing, healthcare and safety, and other needs are deeper in the human person, such as the need for belonging, friendship, personal recognition, guidance, growth and meaning. While quantifiable needs sometimes get the most attention because we can literally count them, intangible needs are no less important to human flourishing.

As a way to meet the needs he sees in the world around him, Jesus gives his apostles the power to preach the Gospel, to cure the sick and drive out demons. His gifts are gratuitous — and so, he says, "Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give." He sends them out to share those gifts with the people they encounter.

His words are not only for the apostles named in today's Gospel. Jesus also imbues power in us, which we celebrate, receive and affirm in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. No single one of us can meet all the needs of the world, but each of us has a special calling to contribute to the kingdom of God. Like the apostles, each one of us is called to preach the Gospel, whether by words or by actions, in front of crowds or one-on-one with those who need the tender care of another human being. At the end of every Mass we attend, we are reminded of being commissioned: "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord." The word "Mass" itself comes from the Latin of this dis*miss*al, "*Ite, missa est*," meaning "Go, you are sent."

A month ago, Pope Leo XIV released his first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*. In it, he outlines the principles of Catholic social teaching, emphasizing the task of integral human development. Key to this teaching is the *imago Dei*, the dignity inherent in human beings as created by God in God's image and likeness. While the document is making a splash because of the pope's engagement with artificial intelligence, his focus on building the civilization of love calls us to hope and conversion. "Even in the darkest nights, the Lord raises up men and women who refuse to give up, who persevere in doing good, who protect the vulnerable and open pathways to reconciliation," he writes. A few paragraphs down, he reminds us: "The civilization of love will not arise from a single or spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanization."

At the end of the day, what we do for and with others matters. God has created us in God's own image and likeness — do we do our best to live out of that image? Do we nourish our own creative expression of God's likeness, promoting the "civilization of love"? Do those who encounter us know, through our tender care and kindness, that they are deeply loved by God?

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