
11 TUESDAY

St Benedict
Tuesday, Week 14 of Year

Hosea 8: 4-7, 11-13

Ps 113B: 3 -10

Matt 9: 32 - 38

“The harvest is rich but the labourers are few” (Matt 9:38). For generations now, that statement of Jesus, and His invitation to pray for more labourers to be sent to the harvest, have been the scriptural inspiration for prayers for vocations to priesthood and religious life in the church. More recently, we’ve come to appreciate that, actually, “vocation” applies to all Christians, not simply to priests and religious. We’re all “called” to be other-Christis for our world. And His words mean that we’re invited to pray that more Christians be sent to share Jesus’ own compassion for people, the crowds He felt sorry for because they were harassed and dejected. They were, He said, like sheep without a shepherd. Through our baptism, we all share in Jesus’ shepherd role for the world. People are still harassed, dejected, oppressed, rootless; feeling sorry for them and doing something about it is a task for the whole church, for each member and not only the ministerial leaders and consecrated ones. Have we perhaps too easily thought that it’s ourselves who are the harassed and dejected? But haven’t we already got Christ as our shepherd? Certainly, we need our priests and dedicated religious, but despite our prayers for “vocations” in the more narrow and ‘traditional’ sense, their numbers have been dropping drastically in most places in recent years. Perhaps we need to broaden the scope of our prayer, asking not only for labourers who will minister to us but for ourselves to become labourers for others, asking for a growth in faith and holiness not only in our Christian family but in the still shepherd-less world around us.