

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

Reading I: I Kings 19: 16b, 19-21

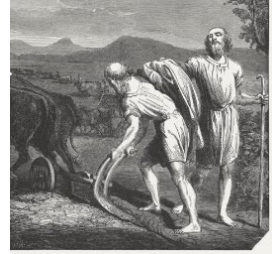
Responsorial Psalm: 16: 1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

Reading II Galatians 5: 1, 13-18

Gospel: Luke 9: 51-62

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/062622.cfm>



Returning to the Sundays of Ordinary time, the readings have a dual focus. The Gospel was chosen first. The First Reading was then selected from the Old Testament to give insight into or background for the Gospel. The Second reading was chosen from the New Testament letters on its own cycle. This structure offers the preacher two themes to choose from for the homily.

Discipleship is the focus of the Gospel and First Reading this Sunday. Disciples are those who follow a leader/teacher to learn and grow. This learning comes through listening, developing practices, and engaging in activities that one is assigned to complete. The disciple follows but does not replace a leader.

Jesus and his disciples are heading to Jerusalem. They have been in the northern part of the holy land near the Sea of Galilee. They began a journey south and the shortest route is to go through Samaria. Under David and Solomon (1000 – 900 BC) the area of Samaria was part of the United Kingdom of Israel. At the time of Assyrian conquest (720 BC), many people were deported and other conquered people were brought into the area. They practiced a mixed religion of following the first five books of the bible and other practices that people brought with them. When the people of Jerusalem and Judea returned from the Babylonian Exile in 520 BC, they rejected help from the Samaritans whom they considered impure for intermarriage and mixed religious practices. This established the animosity that exists between Jews (people of Judea) and Samaritans even to this day.

Hospitality is refused to Jesus and his disciples. James and John want to destroy the Samaritan village. Jesus reprimands them and calls them to a new form of behavior. This is an important text regarding nonviolence. When rejected, Jesus accepts it and moves to the next town. There is no retribution. He does not take action but simply acknowledges their action, understands their position, and moves forward.

Unfortunately, this has not been how Christians have responded toward one another nor toward other religions. Far too often over the centuries, pride has driven people to retaliate against those who are not like us. The division of Christianity in 1054 between Eastern and Western; the Protestant reformation in the 1500s; the treatment of people of different churches in the following centuries; and the continual condemnations today, are all examples of how humanity thought it could do better than what Jesus thought.

Disciples are called to full dedication. The call to be a disciple cannot be just added to things that must be done. Being a disciple should be the central focus with other responsibilities flowing from one's life as a disciple. Jesus' refusal to let a person bury his father seems very harsh. In ancient Israel, it was considered an eldest son's duty and obligation to care for his parents in their later years and to bury them when they die. The son's objection was that he had a priority to his parents over becoming a disciple. He would become one when his parents would die in 10 or 20 years. Jesus calls people to respond fully today.

The same call comes to each person. To be a disciple cannot come after getting a successful position, after making some amount of money, after taking the vacations that I

have planned, nor any of one's other priorities. Discipleship must come first and requires a surrender of a person's plans to God.

Elisha's response to Elijah calls for a similar response. Elisha wants to delay and Elijah leaves him free to make his own decision. Elisha then acts upon his decision. 12 yoke of oxen would have been 24 oxen. In slaughtering the animals, Elisha cannot turn back. He makes a commitment to following Elijah. (Twenty four oxen would have provided an enormous feast for the whole village.)

Paul makes three important points in this later portion of the Letter to the Galatians, freedom, command to love, and living in the Spirit. Freedom is important in spirituality. God never forces while evil does. God always respects human freedom and invites us to use it well. Evil tries to manipulate, restrict options, and present partial truths. Discerning where one has freedom and where one is blocked in, is an important skill in identifying God's action and call.

Paul's use of the spirit and flesh has a different meaning from our usage. Flesh in Paul's theology is not our skin and physicalness. Flesh is humanity without the presence of God. When humans make their decisions and act in a way that is selfish and without concern for others. It is shown in the vices of idolatry, jealousy, envy, and anger. To live in the Spirit is to live according to God's plan. Living in the Spirit shows concern for others through the virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness (Gal 5: 21-22). Paul sees this summarized in the command to love your neighbor as yourself.

#### Reflection Questions:

How is the call to be a Christian different from just joining a religion?

What have been some of the costs of being a disciple that people have borne? What challenges do you find in being a disciple?

What obstacles impede your response to God's call to you?

What virtues do you wish to develop more fully?

#### Themes

The demands of discipleship

Christianity as a way of life

Freedom

Christian virtue

#### Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that we may hear God's call to discipleship and seek first the reign of God in our lives

For the grace of freedom: that we may know freedom of mind and heart so that we can serve those in need around us and not be controlled by the expectations and demands of society

For healing of families and communities: that those of different religious traditions and understanding of the Scriptures may recognize the God who is at work in every heart and experience renewal of their relationships and new ways to cooperate

For all who feel impelled to violence: that the Spirit of God will calm their anger and help them recognize each person as a child of God