

HOMILY SUNDAY 13 – C (Homily 02)

“Responding to God’s Call”

(1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21; Psalm 16; Galatians 5:1, 13-18; Luke 9:51-62)

This Sunday could be called vocation Sunday as the reading are all about a call from God and a variety of responses, culminating in the ideal response that St. Paul presents in the reading to the Galatians.

The ideal disciple is one who responds to Jesus by keeping his command to love others as we love ourselves.

How radical our response to God’s call is meant to be is dramatized by the two prophets, Elijah and his disciple, Elisha. After a moment’s hesitation, Elisha responds by sacrificing his livelihood, letting go of his plans and dreams for his life, leaving it all behind and becoming a servant/disciple of Elijah.

Jesus in the gospel spells out the nature of that call. We are called by the totally non-violent God revealed in Jesus Christ, a truth that the world still struggles to grasp. It follows that the disciples of Jesus must be the same. There is a man in Toronto who regularly writes some of the Canadian bishops, urging them to promote a more radical, broad message of non-violence that goes beyond simply being anti-abortion, to promoting peace and justice and respect for all life, and above all, resistance to armed conflict in all its forms, especially Iraq and Afghanistan.

Jesus goes on to underline the sacrificial aspect of discipleship. The disciple will have to surrender some of his or her plans to follow the Lord. Jesus also speaks of total commitment. This call is radical in that it demands everything of the disciple – there must be no other greater priority.

There is a story of farmyard animals who loved their master so much that they met one day to see what they could do for him in appreciation. The hen suggested they could give him a breakfast in bed of bacon and eggs. The pig replied that was fine for the hen, but for him it would be total commitment! Our response to God’s call would probably line up more with the pig in this story, as Jesus demands total commitment of us also.

A last characteristic of the call to follow him, for Jesus, is the command to proclaim the kingdom of God. This, in a sense, is the most basic element of following Jesus. That is what he was all about. He came to inaugurate a new way of life, the life of God in heaven, here on earth, right here and now. We are not only to proclaim this reign of God; we are to actively and wholeheartedly, with our total being, do everything in our power, by word and action, to help realize that reign of God in our personal lives and in our interactions with all others. That is our *raison-d'être* as well.

It is this reality that was behind my motto as archbishop of the Archdiocese of Keewatin-The Pas, *Regnum Dei Intro Vos*. This is taken from Luke 17:21, the only place in the bible where Jesus not only mentions that the kingdom of God is near, but that the kingdom of God is actually present, within us and among us. What a lofty goal he has given us, one that I want to share with our whole archdiocese, and one that directs all our activity as an archdiocesan leadership team, personnel and hopefully, little by little, all the members of the archdiocese.

St. Paul, in his turn, simply builds on all that Jesus has said and done. As disciples baptized into Jesus Christ, we have been set free from sin and selfishness. We are now free to love, and really love, in an agape kind of way. We are to love others as we love ourselves. We have every reason to have dignity and high self esteem, for we follow Jesus, the Word made Flesh. We are now to live and act as he did, in total selflessness, giving of ourselves as he did. We are to do this not on our own, but through the power of the Holy Spirit, the presence of the Risen Lord within us. We do this because we are disciples of Christ.

The Eucharist that we celebrate now is itself a call to discipleship. We are empowered by God's love in Jesus, through Word and Sacrament, to go out as disciples to love others as he has loved us, and as we love ourselves. In short, we are to go and be the disciples that Jesus is calling us to be.