

HOMILY SUNDAY 13 – C

“Called to Discipleship”

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

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Is your job just a job, or a vocation?

Be a disciple of Jesus: Proclaim the Kingdom; live in the Spirit and love one another.

The readings today portray a clear call to discipleship, beginning with the radical call of Elisha to be a prophet and his total response of leaving everything behind to follow Elijah.

In the gospel Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem and in so doing reveals the depth of commitment demanded of those who would follow him as well as the nature of discipleship.

The nature of discipleship, according to St. Paul in today’s readings, is to proclaim the kingdom, live in the Spirit and love one another. That we can and must all do – regardless of our job or occupation. St. Paul, after his conversion, made proclaiming Jesus his vocation, yet he was a tent-maker and practiced his profession at times.

For some, the depth of commitment is total – they leave all and have no other priority but to proclaim and help bring about the kingdom of God. That commitment leads to many challenges.

No sooner had Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem then he meets opposition. The rejection at the beginning of his journey corresponds to the rejection at Nazareth at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. The rejection at the beginning of each of these major sections of the Gospel foreshadows the rejection that lies ahead in Jerusalem.

Jesus’ introduction to the journey to Jerusalem continues with a warning of the radical demands of discipleship. The three attempts at discipleship here set the call to discipleship above every other duty, whether care for self, care for the dead, or care for family. Would the enthusiastic volunteers be ready to follow him in the face of rejection?

Jesus’ demands are strong – they demand that the priority of service to the kingdom be set above every other priority. Those who have not responded to the call to the kingdom are like the dead, thus let the dead bury the dead. Those who have responded to the call to discipleship are no longer dead. Their concern should be with life and the living: “Go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Because faithfulness would require Jesus to lay down his life, the call to discipleship to Jesus inevitably means unconditional commitment to the redemptive work of God for which Jesus gave his life. The disciple will be like the Lord. Therefore, one should not rush into discipleship with glib promises. On the contrary, the radical demands of discipleship require that every potential disciple consider the cost, give Jesus the highest priority in one's life, and having committed oneself to discipleship, move ahead without looking back. If one looks back when plowing, the furrow will be crooked.

According to Corbin Eddy, Jesus is both like and unlike Moses and Elijah. He will not call down fire from heaven, like Elijah, for he portrays a totally non-violent God who never uses force. He will, however, ascend to God from Jerusalem like Elijah, but from the Cross. Discipleship requires, even at this stage, unwavering commitment to what Jesus calls the kingdom of God.

For John Shea, the way of Jesus is not belonging to the present order of things. It entails a continual struggle to bring about a new understanding of God and neighbour and to create a society based on this new understanding. Any eager desire to follow Jesus must reckon with the difficulties of never belonging to what appears the natural way, the way of creating a home on earth as it is. The kingdom is about steadfastly moving into a future that people must desire more than anything else.

Jean Vanier is someone who is an example of a dedicated modern day disciple of Jesus. At the height of his career as a military man, he felt the call of Jesus to form community with the mentally challenged and invited two men to join him in his home. That was the beginning of the L'Arche movement that continues to spread around the world, providing not institutions but homes for the mentally challenged. His faith in action and the lessons he has learned make him now a sought after retreat master and speaker.

The Eucharist that we celebrate now is a meal for our journey as disciples and a sharing in the eternal banquet already.

So be a disciple of Jesus: Regardless of your career, and within that career, proclaim the Kingdom; live in the Spirit and love one another.