

## 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary time

2 Kings 4.8-11, 14-16, Romans 6. 3-4,8-11, Matthew 10.37-42

The focus of today's Gospel is about our call to discipleship and to service. First, we must define disciple. A disciple is someone who has chosen to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. Another interpretation for disciple is student, one who is learning. As disciples we are called to be witnesses of our faith. To witness in good times and in bad times. It is in accepting the teachings of Jesus Christ, we are called to also accept our sufferings, our trials, and yes even death. Thus, our first vocation in life is that of discipleship to Jesus Christ, to follow Jesus Christ.

We are called to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ through our life, our actions. We evangelize when we live the words of Jesus Christ, the directions given us by God the Father. Now we all can agree this is not easy. Through seeking God, we grow closer and develop a better understanding of God. Through receiving the sacraments, we receive the supernatural graces from God to grow in Faith, Hope and Love. Through receiving the sacraments, using and accepting the graces from the sacraments, and receiving the Word of God are is how we become proficient in our faith. This my friends is a lifelong journey in which there are no short cuts.

Jesus' words are quite alarming, 'whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me' (v .37). St. Thomas Aquinas writes; "The Lord urges that **He** be set ahead of every carnal love (which is loving God with our whole heart, it means that our love for Him is felt even in our flesh; it is not purely or solely a spiritual manner). Now, God is to be loved before all, for God is goodness itself; therefore, He is to be loved more." If we accept the teachings of God then we recognize God as creator of all, He is supreme and most deserving of our love.

Jesus says. "and whoever does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me" (V. 38). St. Thomas Aquinas explains, "For he takes up the cross who afflicts the body, as is found, in 1 Peter 2.21, *for to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His foots steps.*" The cross is born in the heart when one sorrows over sin. Jesus Christ has given us directions how to grow in discipleship throughout the Gospels. One such revelation can be found in St. Matthew's Gospel, the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 6, about almsgiving, prayer and fasting. The Book of Sirach states that it is "great glory to follow the Lord" (Sir. 23.38).

Perhaps an example will help us illustrate this Gospel passage. A young man discerns his vocation. He listens to his calling and enters seminary and later

becomes a Priest. This young man realizes that he may not be home for Christmas, Easter, and birthdays. This Priest later discerns to become a missionary priest, which means he will miss family gatherings, funerals of loved ones, weddings and other family gatherings. The missionary Priest may have to learn a new language, new customs, and learn to adapt to a new climate. Our priests have put love of God first and foremost in their lives. They are examples for us. They truly live out this scriptural passage. I think it is important for all of us to recognize and appreciate the reality of the sacrifice of our Priests but also of their families.

If we are living our faith, our actions of service will demonstrate our faith. Jesus says, “whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because the little one is a disciple-amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.” Note the reward Jesus speaks of is heaven. To serve others without desiring recognition is what Jesus calls us to do. Remember the “WWJD” What would Jesus do bracelets; this is what should be foremost on our mind. What a world this would be! We have opportunities every day to demonstrate our faith through service. We can also serve others through organizations such as altar society, St Vincent de Paul or Knights of Columbus to name a few.

My friends we have free will, we can choose, but remember choices or actions have consequences. Today we are called more than ever to accept Jesus and follow Him. We are called to be his disciples. Jesus tells us this will not be easy, He even says, “Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you” (Mt.5.11). My friends as I look at the cross, as we prepare to receive the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ I pray for us and the world to receive Jesus Christ for He has already received us. Jesus says at the end of Matthews Gospel “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt. 28.20). May our journey of discipleship be fruitful and I encourage to support and thank our priests for their sacrifice.