

13th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – C; June 26th 2022
1 Kings 19: 16b, 19-21; Galatians 5:1, 13-15; Luke 9: 51-62

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

When we go through the Bible we see God calling different individuals time to time for specific task. He called Abraham, Moses and all the Prophets in the Old Testament. In the New Testament Jesus made a random call and selected the twelve men to be his apostles and he continues his call through centuries. When we analyze the call of God, it seems that God does not respect or consider the fundamental needs, frailties and freedom of individuals. In other words the demand of God looks to be very harsh.

In today's first reading we heard how God calling Elisha through Prophet Elijah. Elisha was a farmer and while he was working in the field, Elijah conveyed the message of God. It was a very reasonable request of Elisha that he wanted to bid goodbye to his parents before he followed Elijah. But his simple request was turned down by Elijah asking, **"Have I done anything to you" – means have I called you?** So Elisha understood the urgency of the call and left with Elijah then and there itself.

Coming to the New Testament, we have the account of the call of a few disciples by Jesus in the similar fashion. According to Luke, the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John came at the Lake of Galilee, immediately after the miraculous catch of fish. Matthew was called while he was very busy in his tax office. Jesus didn't give these men a detailed agenda of his mission. He simply said to them, **"Follow me"** and they left everything and followed him.

As we have just listened to the second part of the gospel, we see Jesus encountering three young men who seem to be interested in following Jesus. The first one made an extravagant offer to follow Jesus. But Jesus knew that he didn't understand the cost of the discipleship he had to pay. So Jesus draws his attention to the hardships he has to face by pointing at the hard life Jesus himself has to live. Jesus says, **"The foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head."** The second and the third are ready to follow Jesus with certain conditions. Right away Jesus turned down their conditional readiness for, it was not genuine. Perhaps these men were making some excuses to escape the call of Jesus. So Jesus makes it very clear, **"No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God. Whoever loves father or mother, son or daughter brothers or sisters is not**

worthy of me.” When we read this statement, shall we conclude that Jesus was against respecting our parents and loving our family members? Jesus does not mean that we should not love our dear ones. Rather his point is that the kingdom of God should be given priority in our lives. In other words, our attachment to the family or other things in the world should not be a hindrance to love God.

In the case of most of us, our parents responded to the first call Jesus gave us. In other words, the baptism we received was the response to our first call. But the call of Jesus does not end there; rather he calls us to follow him in different ways and serve him. Today the kingdom of God on earth, the Church, is in grave need of the service of men and women in different areas. In the past a lot of work was done in the Church by volunteers. But in the modern age less and less people are coming forward to render service to the Church. The vocations to priesthood and religious life go down the hill; it is hard to get lay ministers to take up the ministries; the pious organizations in the Church are dying out for lack of willing people to run them; these days people find all sorts of excuses not to come to worship God and serve Him.

At the same time, we are very careful about our worldly matters. We never fail to keep up a doctor's appointment; we are before time for a music concert or show; we will not miss a big sale going in the malls and we will never neglect to take the children to various school activities. But coming to the matter of practicing our faith and do service to God we have all sorts of excuses not to go to Church. Many go to Church on weekend, if they don't have any other things on their way. Due to the introduction of the refrigerator all of us are forced to eat a lot of leftover food, though it is not healthy. In a way many want to give God the leftover time. But God is expecting from us the priority for him. If we have time for God, no doubt, in our need God will have abundance of time for us. If we have left over time for God, He too will have the same for us when we are in trouble and need him. Many turn to God only when all the means fail and then they demand that God should act right away. Let us remember the words of Jesus, **“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.”** (Mt. 6: 33). Let us stand with the Lord so that he may stand with us. **In Psalm 145: 18-20 we read, “The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to who call upon him in truth. He fulfills the desire of all who fear him. He hears their cry and saves them. The Lord keeps all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.”**