

June 28, 2026
13th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Matthew 10:37-42

Jesus said to his apostles: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple--amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward."

Background:

The Gospel text for this Sunday is the conclusion of Jesus' instruction to the apostles before he sends them out to preach to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matthew describes Jesus as being moved with compassion for the people because "they were troubled and abandoned." (Matthew 9:36) Therefore, Jesus has called twelve of his disciples and bestowed upon them the authority that he himself was given, and he sends them to the lost. The instruction that the apostles received last week continues and concludes in this Gospel reading.

This Gospel text is the first time in Matthew's Gospel where the word cross is used. We may associate the cross here with the cross of Jesus. While that may be a way to personally reflect on the Gospel, to focus exclusively on Jesus' cross misses the reality, that Jesus and his contemporaries lived in a world where the Romans frequently used crucifixion as a form of execution to discourage undesired behavior. In one example, a Roman general crucified 2,000 Jews and placed them on the roadsides of Galilee after putting down an attempted revolt.

Jesus cautions the apostles that they must love him more than one's family. This is shocking to Jesus' contemporaries. Most of us in our culture were raised in a way that would prepare us for the day when we would leave home to start our own families. For a person to leave one's family would be difficult to imagine for Jesus' contemporaries. One's life and identity were tied to maintaining their status within their family and society. You may think of the fate of the young prodigal son. A person's worth, esteem, honor, and financial support were all based in one's family.

While Jesus' way of instructing may seem peculiar and even a bit offensive in our culture, that would not have been so for the people that Jesus was addressing. Jesus was speaking in a way that was familiar to the Jews of his day. Many believed that when their time came breaking into history, there would be division among families, and one member of a family rising up against another. Even today, those familiar with the OCIA can recount stories of families ostracizing those who have chosen to join the Catholic Church.

While Jesus' instruction reminds the disciples of what they are leaving behind, he also speaks of what they will receive. They were the first ones to have received Jesus himself, and they will receive the prophet's reward. In addition, they are being sent as representatives of Jesus, so they can expect a corresponding reward. As the simplest act of courtesy, giving a cup of water to one who thirsts, will reap abundant blessing from God, the gift of their sacrifice to proclaim God's coming will be blessed in the same way. Jesus' instruction would have made a shocking impact on the early disciples as they prepared to proclaim the coming of God. He reminds them of the dedication required of them, and the great blessing being bestowed on them for their willingness to accept this responsibility. While Jesus' disciples risk the real possibility of being rejected by family, they are also joining a new community whose central relationship is in Jesus.

Reflection Questions:

1. Have there been times in your life when you felt particularly worthy, or unworthy? Does the memory of these give you context, for when Jesus requires great love, and taking up your cross, to be worthy of him?
2. How many different support networks are you part of? Do you have a sense of belonging, that you too are a necessary part of these organizations?
3. How are you affected by dividedness within the society in which we live?
4. Are you one who enjoys transition and new possibilities, or one who prefers consistency?
5. Who are the people whose relationships you most value?
6. Has your relationship with God ever come between you and any of your other relationships?
7. Do you know people who have had family relationships threatened or lost because of their effort to live as they believed God has called them?
8. When it comes to your spiritual life and relationship with God, how is God present in the difficult and painful periods of your life?
9. Can you take some time now to talk with God about your own desire for and/or fear of being in relationship with God?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are prepared and distributed by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel, as edited from Reflections authored by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

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Excerpts from the readings for June 28, 2026, the Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

One day Elisha came to Shunem, where there was a woman who urged him to dine with her. Afterward, whenever he passed by, he used to stop there to dine. She said to her husband, "Elisha is a holy man of God. Let us arrange a little room on the roof and furnish it for him with a bed, table, chair, and lamp, so that when he comes to us he can stay there." Sometime later Elisha arrived and stayed in the room overnight. Later Elisha asked, "Can something be done for her?" His servant Gehazi answered, "Yes! She has no son, and her husband is getting on in years." Elisha said, "Call her." When the woman had been called and stood at the door, Elisha promised, "This time next year you will be fondling a baby son."

For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

Through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.

For you have said, "My kindness is established forever;" in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.

Blessed the people who know the joyful shout; in the light of your countenance they walk.

At your name they rejoice all the day, and through your justice they are exalted.
You are the splendor of their strength, and by your favor our horn is exalted.
To the Lord belongs our shield, and the Holy One of Israel, our king.

Brothers and sisters:

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?
We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ
was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.
If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.
We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him.
As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God.
Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.

Jesus said to his apostles:

"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,
and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;
and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.
Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.
Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward,
and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man's reward.
And 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."

Excerpts from 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16A; Psalm 89:2-3, 16-19; Romans 6:3-4, 8-11; and Matthew 10:37-42