

June 28, 2020

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Matthew 10:37-42

"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 twelve 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 calls twelve of his disciples and bestows upon them the authority that he himself was given, and he sends them to those who are lost. Last week, he instructed them to fear not, and to know that God knows you so intimately that every hair of your head has been counted. That instruction continues in this gospel text.

Jesus cautions them that they must love him more than one's family. This is shocking to Jesus' contemporaries. Most of us are raised in a way that will prepare us for the day when we will leave home to start our own families. For a person to leave one's family at the time of Jesus was totally unacceptable, and it would likely result in the death of anyone but the most resourceful. You may think of the fate of the prodigal son after he left his father. Worth, honor, and financial support were all based in one's family.

While Jesus' instruction reminds the disciples of what they are leaving behind, he also tells them what they will receive in exchange. They will go out as representatives of Jesus himself. They are ones who have received a prophet, Jesus himself, and they will receive the prophet's reward, as he explained. As the simplest act of courtesy, giving a cup of water (or the use of a bathroom), 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. How many different support networks are you part of? In what ways do they make significant contributions to you?
2. Are any of those support networks in transition currently? How will you be affected by that transition?
3. Are you a person who enjoys transition and new possibilities, or one who prefers consistency?
4. Who are the people whose relationship you most value?
5. Has your relationship with God ever come between any of your other relationships?
6. Do you know people who have had family relationships threatened or lost because of their effort to live as they believed God was calling them to?
7. Do you have any meaningful relationships that are always enjoyable, life-giving, and rewarding?
8. When it comes to your spiritual life and relationship to God, is it easier for you to see God's spirit accompanying you in the good times, or in the difficult and painful periods of your life?
9. Mary, Francis, Clare and many other saints and ordinary people grew to discover a love of God that was so strong that they were willing to sacrifice their relationship with family and friends in order to pursue their relationship with God. Can you imagine that kind of passion in your relationship to God?

10. Can you take some time now to talk to God about your own desire for and/or fear of being in relationship with God where God is the center of your life?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. 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, 2020, 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." Some time 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