

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

June 28, 2020 Cycle A

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Loving and caring God, you welcome us as we gather in your name to share life and your Word. Just as the woman in the first reading welcomed the prophet, may we always welcome your Word and allow it to be the light that guides our lives.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator reads focus statement: The theme of hospitality connects the first and third readings. The Gospel speaks clearly about the cost and rewards of discipleship. In the second reading, Paul reminds the Romans that baptism into the Death and Resurrection of Christ calls them to daily die to sin and to daily allow the new life of Christ to rise in them.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: 2Kings 4:8-11

This reading is part of a series of stories about the prophet Elisha. The reason for its choice is clearly the reference in the Gospel that those who welcome a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. The unnamed woman is described as a "woman of influence." She is a woman of means able to offer the prophet, Elisha, room and board on a regular basis. It seems that the prophet has a special place in the home and heart of this woman. The life of a traveling prophet, like that of traveling business people, could be lonely. The prophet most likely looks forward to his visits with the woman who seems to love having him. The woman's hospitality is rewarded by the promise of a son that she and her husband have been longing for.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 89

These verses reflect the couple's joy on hearing that they will be blessed with a son.

SECOND READING: Roman 6:3-4, 8-11

Paul reminds us that baptism into Christ Jesus involves a death to self so that we can allow Christ and his values to rise up in us. This dying and rising is ritualized in Baptism especially when done by immersion. In our going into and under the water, we

are dying to sin and self. In rising up out of the water, we are rising to a new life in Christ. Living life as a baptized Christian involves a daily effort to die to the false or sinful self (jealously, unforgiveness, greed) and a daily effort to allow our true self in Christ to radiate through us (love, kindness, compassion).

Just as death had no lasting power over Christ, so sin need not have lasting power over baptized Christians. If we draw on the power of the resurrected Lord, we can withstand the assaults of sin. However, this will not be an easy battle. It will demand constant vigilance and denial of our old self.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Matt. 10:37-42

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

GOSPEL: Matthew 10:37-42

This Gospel has two sections. The first contains a number of miscellaneous sayings by Jesus concerning the cost of discipleship. The second relates to the authority of the Apostles and the fate of those who welcome them.

In the first section, Jesus offers a number of what are sometimes called ‘hard sayings’:

- He who loves another more than Jesus is not worthy to be his disciple.
- He who fails to embrace the Cross is not worthy to be his disciple.
- He who seeks self-fulfillment more than self-surrender to Christ is not worthy of him.

In these “hard sayings,” Jesus is conveying to us that our commitment to him must supersede all other commitments and relationships, even those as binding and as precious as the relationship between a parent and a child. The Gospel does not advocate abandonment of familial ties and responsibilities, but places the commitment to Christ above all. The reality is, of course, if one is truly a committed disciple of Christ, he/she becomes more capable of loving family members and all others with a selfless love. The third “hard saying” reminds us that if we are only out to satisfy ourselves, we will in the end be losers. On the other hand, if we seek to give of ourselves, we become our best selves and most pleasing to God.

The second part of today’s Gospel calls us to be hospitable to those who carry the message of Christ to us. In welcoming the messengers of the Gospel, we are welcoming Christ himself. The gift of even a cup of water to little ones will not go unrewarded.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse or image in the readings caught your attention or drew you in. Was there a verse or aspect of the readings that challenged you?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. Did you grow up in a home that offered hospitality to others? In what ways does your parish show hospitality to newcomers? In what ways could it do a better job?

3. Dying to the false self is usually not easy. What can help us in this process?

4. In the Gospel, Jesus says that the giving of a glass of water will not go unrewarded. What are other examples of small acts of love that you and I can practice?

5. Name one thing today’s Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week’s readings. Suggestion: Live the message of hospitality in your home, neighborhood, workplace and Church.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God’s Word and listened to others’ reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

Facilitator: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Jesus, in the Gospel you tell us that commitment to you must be the number one priority in our lives. Help me to recognize what, if any, other loves I have that distract me from you, and help me to move towards putting you first in my life.*

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we need to pray? Pray especially for those who must flee their homes because of poverty and persecution. Pray also for those carrying a heavy cross at this time.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

Prayer of Abandonment

**Father, I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me as you will.**

For whatever you do, I thank you;

I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let your will be done in me as in all creatures;

I ask nothing else.

Into your hands I commend my soul;

I give it to you with all the love of my heart.

I love you and I want to give myself

into your hands with a trust

beyond all measure

because you are my Father.

- Charles de Foucauld

I thank God for my handicaps,

for through them, I have found myself,

my work, and my God.

- Helen Keller