

### **Thirteenth Sunday day in Ordinary Time C/2016**

The readings of this Sunday talk about God's call to serve him. They show that God calls people in many ways and in various circumstances of life. They invite us to listen to God's call, to follow him and to dedicate our life to his kingdom.

The first reading describes the vocation of the prophet Elisha. It shows that Elisha was a farmer who did not expect at all to one day become a prophet. It shows also the action of the prophet Elijah who threw his cloak over Elisha in a sign of succession. The text ends with the determination of Elisha who left everything behind in order to follow Elijah.

What is behind this text is the idea that God calls us in the very ordinary circumstances of life and regardless of personal merits. There is also the idea that God's call involves detachment, sacrifice and a break with the past. The last idea is related to the truth that serving God requires courage, determination and surrendering to his will.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus calls different people to follow him. First of all, the Gospel reports on the fulfillment of Jesus' time and his resolve to go to Jerusalem. Then, it reports on his sending of the messengers before him in order to prepare his reception. It also reports on the refusal of the people of Samaria to welcome him.

After that, the Gospel gives the reaction of some of the disciples who wanted to destroy the city that refused to welcome Jesus. Then, it gives the opposite reaction of Jesus who did not give in to their request.

The Gospel ends up reporting three instances of different calls. The first is about the initiative of a man who wanted to follow Jesus, but whom he dissuaded. The second is about the initiative of Jesus who called some people and the mention of their excuse.

What do we learn from today's readings? Today I want to talk about the demands of the call to serve God. First of all, let me say that God calls people in many ways, in different circumstances of life and independently of their merits.

This case is evidenced in the first reading by the call of Elisha who was a farmer, but whom Elijah found worthy of succeeding him.

What this episode reminds us is that God reaches out to us in the very ordinary circumstances of life where we live, and in the things we do in the world. Because it is about the very ordinary circumstances of life, it means that God calls us to work for him regardless of our merits and of our personal history. For that reason, none of us can feel less valuable than others because he is not gifted enough or because he is late to come to faith. We are all called as we are, in the same way, in order to serve the Lord.

However, though God's call is freely given and regardless of our merits, nonetheless, it is demanding. The first demand is about the immediate response to God's call. In fact, those called in the Gospel failed this demand because they wanted first to go bury their dead or to say good bye to the family.

This point is very crucial today. Why? Because we live in a culture in which we are told not to rush things and to take our time. Of course, it is important to slow down, to reflect

and to mature the decision to make. The trouble, however, is that what is profitable in ordinary life might not be beneficial for our eternal life.

In fact, human experience has taught us that the chances we lose today, we might not have them tomorrow. The grace we have today to listen to the word of God and his invitation to change, we might not have it tomorrow, because things can happen in between, which make such a possibility impossible. Therefore, it is always wise to seize the grace of the moment when it comes our way and to make a decision for our eternal life.

That is why it would be foolish to think that we still have time. We never know what tomorrow brings us. I believe that is what Jesus wants to tell those people he called so that they do not delay the decision to make for the sake of the kingdom. As we know by experience, many people are today brokenhearted and full of regrets and remorse because they missed the opportunity that would have changed their lives for the best.

The second demand is the acceptance of sacrifice. In fact, it seems to me that, by not allowing those people he called to go bury their dead or to say goodbye to the family, Jesus wants to tell us that to be his disciple requires some sacrifice on our part.

Moreover, to be a disciple requires of us also the courage to break with the past in order to start a new future under Jesus' guidance. That is why Jesus says that "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what he left behind is fit for the kingdom of God"

In that sense, it would be difficult to be a good disciple without paying the price of what it means. As St Paul said in the second reading, if we want to satisfy our own desires, passions and emotions, it will be very difficult to respond correctly to God.

This is a very unpleasant subject in our society based on the culture of pleasure and enjoyment of life through money and sex. In such culture, sacrifice is always seen as something negative, as a constraint to the freedom of enjoyment of life and pleasure.

And yet, the definition of the word, sacrifice, means a "giving up of one thing for the sake of another". As such, sacrifice is not always negative; it means only that we renounce something for another more valuable; we give up something for another more important. It is like when we decline to buy an expensive car for a cheap one in order to save money for the vacation or the schooling of our children.

As long as we are embedded in the culture of pleasure with the idea that sacrifice is negative, we will be in trouble when it is about serving Jesus seriously and being a good disciple. That is why we have to pray that the Lord may awaken our conscience to the demands of his Kingdom. Let us ask him the grace of being his good disciples. God bless you all!

**1 Kings 19: 16b, 19-21; Galatians 5: 1, 13-18; Luke 9: 51-62**



Homily Date: June 26, 2016  
© 2016 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD  
Contact: [www.mbala.org](http://www.mbala.org)  
Document Name: 20160626homily.pdf