**13th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C**

**26th June 2022**

**Reading I: 1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21**

It is interesting to compare Elijah's call of Elisha with Jesus' call of his disciples as related in the gospel for this Sunday. The two stories are not entirely coincidental, however, because the Gospel authors may have given us their stories with the older ones in mind. They may have stressed specific details to stress the continuity between the old institutions and the new while at the same time comparing the relative values.

For example, Elisha said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and I will follow you." When Jesus called two potential disciples, one said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." In both cases, all pre-existing responsibilities have to be given up.

The second point of comparison between the two stories is that is that as Elijah's mantle falls upon Elisha so the Holy Spirit falls on the disciples. Elisha succeeds Elijah, becoming a prophet in a succession (2 Kings 2). And, when Jesus ascends to heaven, his Spirit empowers his followers to continue his redemptive work in the world.

When Elijah cast his cloak over Elisha he was claiming him as his own - he also endowed him with his own power and personality. Elisha's response is irreversible for, in slaughtering the oxen and burning the plough, he makes a return to his old way of life impossible. Luke, in particular, will draw on the stories about Elisha in his teaching on the nature of Christian discipleship. Jesus's call to discipleship will have more urgency than that of Elijah and he expects a more prompt answer than that of Elisha.

**Responsorial Psalm: 16:1-2a, 5, 7-11**

The early Church seized upon this psalm as a prophecy of Christ's resurrection. In his Pentecost sermon as presented in Acts, Peter quotes verses 9-11. Once again the “I” of the psalms is the “I” of the living Christ. But it also includes members of his body, and so we may take this psalm upon our own lips and make it a prayer of praise for our inheritance, for our call into the life of Christ.

**Reading II: Galatians 5:1, 13-18**

In the early years, freedom from keeping rules was the hallmark of Christian life. Instead there was the natural behaviour of one filled with the love of God. This freedom, however, was constantly threatened by some conservatives who could not bring themselves to abandon the traditional way of Jewish life based on knowing the Torah. Some members of the Galatian church were succumbing to the arguments of Paul's opponents which required the circumcision of Gentile converts.

For Paul, this completely undermined the gospel. Christians are free because they do not have to acquire salvation by ceremonies or by their virtuous lives, but because they have already been given salvation as a gift.

There is only one obligation for Christians of all traditions, and that is the law of love. "The whole law is fulfilled in one word, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Paul does not overlook the first and greatest commandment—the love of God; he is speaking to those who have already heard the message of justification, and who have therefore been brought into the love of God. Paul is talking about how that love of God can only express itself historically as love of neighbour.

John Robinson (Anglican Bishop of Woolwich 1959-1969) said that each Christian should be equipped with a set of antennae, enabling him to know in each situation what love requires, without a lot of rules and regulations.

Paul, a former Pharisee, believed passionately in freedom. He had known, for too long, the slavery of a rigid religious system, the bondage of a religion of law and precept. Christ had set him free from all that and he gloried in his freedom. He ached for his disciples to value the freedom that was theirs; he was sad, and angry, when freedom that was theirs was not truly appreciated: 'stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery' (v. 1). He understood very well the awesome responsibility of freedom and scrupulously respected the conscience of his disciples: he would not compel them - they must make their personal decisions.

But Christian freedom is never licence to do as one pleases; it is always motivated - and constrained— by love. 'For though l am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all' (1 Corinthians 9:19).

**Gospel: Luke 9:51-62**

A most remarkable aspect of the twelve followers of Jesus was their diversity. They included men who would in any other situation be at loggerheads. More than one of them were Zealots, who advocated violence against the Roman occupiers. Others compromised and Matthew was a quisling who profited by the occupation. But, it was the Zealots who had the popular support.

James and John, living up to their reputation as 'sons of thunder' (Mark 3:17), expect Jesus to act like Elijah (2 Kings 1:10-12). Their suggestion that fire should be called down from heaven to punish the Samaritans who would not receive Jesus implies a degree of jingoism. He turns and rebukes James and John because his way is one of mercy, not destruction.

This new section of Luke's gospel begins with this incident in Samaria. In Luke’s chronology Jesus decides that the time is opportune to confront his enemies in Jerusalem. But the Samaritan shrines were in competition with the Jerusalem Temple and they were hostile to pilgrims.

It seems probable that Jesus felt a constant temptation to seek an easy way of fulfilling his mission by adopting a popular Zealot line. But this was for him precisely that, a temptation, and one that he constantly resisted and that brought him, humanly speaking, to the cross. Every contemporary movement would have welcomed the support of Jesus but he remains himself, the judge of all human causes.

The second paragraph (vv. 57-62) introduces three would-be followers of Jesus. It seems that the first one highlights the uncertainty, the discomfort and penalties that await the disciple.

For the second candidate it is not implied, of course, that the father has just died: the man's excuse is that he must wait until his father is dead before he can become a disciple - he appeals to the fourth commandment to honour one’s parents. Others who are insensitive to the call of Jesus, and therefore ‘spiritually dead’ will take care of the man's obligation to his father.

As for the third man, he like Elisha, (1 Kings 19:19-21) simply wants to take his leave of his people. But Luke makes it clear that Jesus is even more demanding than Elijah. The man who is suitable for the proclaiming of the kingdom is one who gives himself to it without reserve like the ploughman who must give his whole attention to ploughing a straight furrow.

All the sayings teach, in forthright language, that sacrifice and total self-commitment are demanded of a disciple of Jesus. They suggest, too, that life's most painful choices are not between good and evil but between good and perfection.

Taken together, the two scenes of the reading serve to correct wrong ideas of what it means to follow Jesus. Discipleship does not consist in zealous punishment of those who reject Jesus and his mission; but neither does it consist in half-heartedness towards it. All of this comes from the teacher who walks resolutely toward the goal.