

30<sup>th</sup> June 2019 (13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

1 Kings 19:16,19-21; Psalm 15(16):1-2,5,7-11; Galatians 5:1,13-18; Luke 9:51-62.

**'I will follow you wherever you go!'**

The gospel today starts with the announcement that Jesus has now set his face towards Jerusalem. From now on, in the gospel according to Luke, Jesus will be on a journey towards the city of Jerusalem from where he will be taken up to heaven. This gospel has an interesting structure, it starts in Jerusalem and concludes in the city; Jesus comes from God and returns to God. Jesus is not afraid of what is to come, but is determined to face what awaits him in Jerusalem.

This determination comes with a sense of urgency. There is no time to linger, there is a mission that needs to be carried out first by Jesus and then by all who choose to follow him. Jesus became human to reveal to us the face of God, and he wants to achieve this mission before he reaches Jerusalem. (Traditionally the Transfiguration that we read about earlier in this chapter, happened only forty days before the passion and death of Jesus; hence the sense of urgency.)

After the resurrection and his return to the Father, Jesus' mission is inherited by the disciples and the whole faith community whom Jesus sends out to speak about God's love to all humanity. Again this is an urgent message. The disciples need to get involved in this message and take it as seriously as possible. We see this expressed in the three, almost terse, responses Jesus gives to the disciples who either ask or are invited to follow him.

The abrupt tone of Jesus almost makes us think that Jesus did not really want these three people to follow him. Jesus neither refuses nor dampens their enthusiasm but wants to be clear about their expectations. This is, perhaps, one of the issues we meet with in our world today. We often struggle when someone stops us in our tracks and challenges us, especially if the Church or faith is involved. We almost expect all doors to be opened wide for us and red carpets rolled out to welcome us in. Jesus promises us God's infinite mercy and love, but also often warns us not to abuse God's abundant generosity but to welcome and accept it with gratitude and respect.

In our Baptism and Confirmation, we Christians have elected to follow Jesus as his disciples; we have taken upon ourselves the role of proclaiming the Good News and of making God known to those around us. We do not become Christian for ourselves, but to be of service to the world. The question Jesus asks of us in today's gospel reading is whether we have really understood this duty and responsibility.

One disciple, very enthusiastically proclaims: I will follow you wherever you go! Jesus says: right! Firstly, do you understand that there are no expensive cars driving us around, no luxury hotels to live in, and often no time to put up our feet! Animals have nests and holes to retire to in the night, but the Messiah and his followers do not always enjoy this luxury. There is work to be done and following Jesus is a commitment to an urgent mission.

The other two disciples want more time to spend with their families. The first wants to be able to be his parents' carer while the second one wants to go back and do his farewells properly. Once again Jesus does not condemn or reject them, but challenges the way they understand discipleship. This is an urgent call; there is no time to waste. Once one chooses to become a Christian and a follower of Jesus, then he needs to take this calling seriously. Looking back at what one has left behind indicates that one is not yet ready to take up this calling.

We are all called to live our Christian mission within different environments. Each one of us needs to respond according to the call that we have received, but we all need to be committed to our Christian calling if we want to be called disciples of Jesus.

.... Mario