

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time: What a disciple ought to be...

1 Kings 19:16b,19-21; Psalm 16:1-2,5,7-8,9-10,11; Galatians 5:1,13-18; Luke 9:51-62

Dear family and friends of CCST,

The responsorial psalm provides an ideal disposition of a disciple. "You are my inheritance, O Lord" (Ps. 16:6). I invite you to let it sink and settle in your heart for a week. Some of us, if not all, have struggled with inheritance which robs off our ability to love others. Some people fight over the inheritance. The family relationship is divided and breaks down; good vibes are thrown out of the window, and bitterness sets in the relationship. It's sad, but it happens. We can only pray that there will be healing and forgiveness.

"You are my inheritance, O Lord." It is a simple exclamation of faith acknowledging that the Lord is our refuge in times of need, light and counsel on our way, and joy and delight of our soul. The Lord is all that lasts; he is all that endures. Everything else passes away and is one day gone with the wind, all the gifts God gives us, and all the things and people we have. But our Lord, our ultimate inheritance, is forever. And he is enough for us. When this is fully understood and wholly embraced, the inordinate attachments to material things, people, negative emotions, and bitter feelings don't have power over us, but our gratitude to God, who makes himself our inheritance and shares in his redeeming love for all. This is discipleship!

Our Lord Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem. His decision to pass through Samaria reveals that nothing can hinder his determination to bring about the Kingdom of God, our salvation, and our inheritance. He extinguished the combative attitude of James and John against the hostility of the Samaritans who refused their passage through their area. Instead, he faced them with tenderness, for they too needed salvation. He moved to pass through another village and did not allow negative sentiments and emotions to get in the way of the work that must be done.

Jesus could have avoided going to Jerusalem, which would mean abandoning his mission. But he remained faithful and resolute because of his incredible love for humanity, and obedience to the Father, even if his journey led to his passion, crucifixion, and death.

The journey to Jerusalem is harrowing. If ever we put his journey in an advertisement, it reads like this: "Come join Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and suffer." Anyone who reads such an invitation would probably have a second thought. But the cost of discipleship cannot be avoided nor softened if we are to decide for Jesus.

We learned from the Gospel that there are "would-be followers" of Jesus. They desired to follow him but were hindered by personal and family concerns, like the difficulty of giving up the comforts of the homes, family attachments, and earthly priorities over the Kingdom of God. These are legitimate excuses, but they speak of the everyday challenges we all have in following Jesus. Discernibly, it is the difficulty of detachment and letting go. We have a clinging heart and tend to inordinate attachments to material things, people, and our past that may keep us from letting go and moving forward.

Jesus' invitation to walk with him demands loyalty. Of course, this is not easy! On one of my vacations back home, my sickly mother asked me, "Why can't you stay? Why can't you be a priest in our place? I never have words to answer my mother; if I have, they will never be sufficient. I look at her, not knowing what to answer, but only a dry smile with tears in my eyes. Yes, it is not easy. However, loyalty to Jesus is possible when we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and always look forward to the goal, that is, to share in his glory. Our Lord would say, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the Kingdom of God." The disposition of Elisha exemplifies this after receiving the cloak from Elijah in the first reading. Elisha found something more compelling than what he was doing, and he could only attend this by walking intimately with Elijah. He set his heart on the new field to plow by leaving behind what he was doing – he slaughtered the oxen and used the plowing equipment to prepare the food for the people to feast (cf 1 Kings 19:21). He let go of what he had and celebrated.

When Jesus says, "come follow me," he calls us to follow him up to the cross and die with him. But it is not an invitation to be crucified as he was, nor an invitation to martyrdom. Instead, it is an invitation to carry with

love the cross of daily living; more than anything else, it is an invitation to die to self-centeredness, egotism, vanity, and self-righteousness; because these are some of the disorders of human relationships and hinder the growth of the Kingdom of God. In the second reading, St. Paul invites us to live according to the Spirit, not the flesh. By saying "to live not according to the flesh," he emphasizes not to give in to the things that enslave us, like pride, lust, greed, envy, jealousy, anger, and laziness. He reminds us, "Christ has set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery; you were called for freedom... But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love" (Gal 5:1,13).

Our decision to love others, as Jesus loved us, manifests our being free sons and daughters of God. To love others nurtures and sharpens the inheritance God bestowed on us.

Jesus is our inheritance -- he is the love we receive, the love we try to follow and imitate, and the love we willingly give. There could be no discipleship apart from the love of neighbor; there could be no genuine Holy Communion apart from standing or making a decision in the name of Jesus. Our Patron St. Therese said, "Without love, deeds, even the most brilliant, count as nothing."

Our Lord Jesus completed his journey to Jerusalem and bestowed the Kingdom of God -- our salvation and inheritance -- upon us. We are still on our pilgrim way, and the decision to walk and choose for Jesus and to love others is ours to make every day.

God bless you!

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor