

## St. James School End of Year Mass

June 18, 2014

**Weekday readings: 2Kings 2. 1, 6-14. Psalm 31 Mt.6. 1-6; 16-18.**

The end of the school year is fast approaching and soon it will be time for us to move on, as we leave teachers and our fellow students behind. Most of you will probably consider the year a success if you had a good teacher, taken in some of life's best lessons and your appetite for more learning has been fired up.

In today's reading from the Second Book of Kings it is a teacher, the prophet Elijah, who is moving and leaving his student behind. As a prophet Elijah had been appointed by God to speak God's word to the people of his time. So when Elijah spoke, it was God himself who was speaking through him. The prophet has had a long ministry, and has grown weary from it all. He is now ready to depart from this world, leaving all behind, including his student Elisha. But Elisha does not want to be left behind, and refuses to remain behind. When Elijah comes to the River Jordan, he takes his mantle and strikes the water, and the waters separate and teacher and student walk across to the other side.

This immediately reminds us of Moses taking his staff and striking the waters of the Red Sea, causing the waters to part and then leading the people of Israel to freedom on the other side. The bible refers to this as the Exodus, their exit from Egypt and leaving their former lives as slaves behind. So Elijah's crossing the River Jordan is his exodus, the beginning of his departure from this world.

It is clear that Elijah has a very high regard for his student, and he asks Elisha what he can do for him, before he is taken away from him. Now Elisha is a very alert student, and quite bold too, and he asks the old prophet, "Please let me inherit a double portion of your spirit." This is a hard thing, he is told. Then he is told to wait and see what happens. While they are still talking, chariots of fire and horses of fire suddenly appear, and Elijah is swept away in a great whirlwind and never seen again.

The young Elisha is grief stricken, but he picks up the mantle, the symbol of prophetic authority left behind by Elijah, walks back to the Jordan, strikes the water with it, and when the waters separate as before, he crosses back over to the other side. Elisha then realizes that his prayer has been answered, and he now embraces the call to carry on the prophetic role of Elijah and Moses before him.

One of course might wonder what would have happened if Elisha had not asked Elijah for a double share of his spirit. Probably not a whole lot, really. Just think about it. If we don't have

any spirit, we won't have much drive or desire, and we will likely not accomplish very much in life. But if you got spirit, you will no doubt make something of yourself and accomplish something great.

Jesus recognized the importance of spirit too. He said, "The flesh has nothing to offer; it is the Spirit that gives life." From the beginning, Jesus was over-shadowed by the Holy Spirit. He was a spirit filled human being. Before he departed from this world, Jesus asked his disciples to wait and pray for the gift of his Spirit. He said, "Ask, and the Father will give the gift of the Holy Spirit."

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells them, "Whenever you pray go into your room and shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." We need to ask, we need to pray. Just like Elisha asked Elijah for a double portion of his spirit, so we also need to ask Jesus to send the Holy Spirit into our hearts. When we have the spirit of Jesus in us, it is so much easier to live the kind of life that Jesus desires of us, because we are not merely relying on our strength but the spirit of Jesus strengthens us to live the kind of life he lived and to do the kinds of things that he did.

Dear children, you will soon be leaving your teachers at school behind and taking a summer break, but hopefully you will have learned some great lessons that you can carry with you and serve you well down the road. Always be grateful for all you have received from your classroom teachers, yes, but also from your parents, your first teachers, and, yes, from your fellow students too.

Have a wonderful summer break. Don't forget to come to church on Sundays or Saturdays. Don't forget to pray. Remember that you are loved. And don't forget to love your closest neighbours, the members of your own families.

**Father Neil**