

13TH SUNDAY ORD. (C)

CALLED TO FREEDOM

June 25/26, 2022

After the fall, God has been calling some people to deliver His message to His people. The message is about knowing His will and leading them to freedom. Some of them were Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, including Elisha whose call to be a prophet was read to us today. He was to succeed Elijah.

Elisha was a farmer, and in order to respond wholeheartedly to the call, he sacrificed all that he had and gave to the people. After that he followed Elijah and asked for the double portion of his spirit. He started a new vocation.

In the gospel, we heard what Jesus told the would-be disciples when they started giving excuses when called. He told them about the need to abandon oneself and everything which may be obstacles in their ways to be faithful followers. He told them about the need to detach oneself from earthly things and even close relatives.

It may seem that being called to follow the Lord will lead someone to lose his freedom and happiness. This is because Jesus often talked about denying oneself and taking the cross to follow Him, (Mk.8:34-35). Also saying to His disciples: "I assure you, only with difficulty will a rich man enter the kingdom of God" (Mt.19:23), and His disciples were shocked for saying that.

But St. Paul tells us in the second reading that we have been called to freedom. He tells us that if we walk by the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of the flesh which enslave us. "For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want". It is said that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom". When we attach ourselves to earthly things and people we become slaves to them.

Every Christian has been called to serve the Lord, to commit his life to Him. Some have responded, but many are yet to respond, because we are yet to commit ourselves to Jesus. We have put our hands on the plough, but we are still looking back. We are finding all kinds of excuses to explain why we are not committed Catholics. We put blame on the church and other people; this person or that person has said this or done that. St. Paul tells us again

that we should not use freedom we have been called to as an opportunity to bite and devour one another; rather we are to serve one another through love.

The freedom we have been called to is not like the one we often hear around us being talked about; that I am free to do this or that or say this or that even if it is not the right thing to do or say in the eyes of God. It is a call to do God's will, to know what is good, pleasing and perfect, (Rom.12:2b). If we do not use the freedom God has given us according to His will and design, there is chaos and confusion. To follow the Lord is to find freedom and peace.

How am I living my freedom as a Christian? Am I enslaved by somebody or something? Am I led by the Spirit to do what I do and say what I say? Have I responded to God's call to be His disciple and witness to the world? Is He the only Master I have or there are others beside?

Even though Jesus made it clear to His disciples that things would be difficult for His followers, their lives testify that they were happy and were not in want. They had inner joy and peace even when they were persecuted. They were not different from us in any way, but when they responded to God's call things changed and they were able to live by the Spirit. There are many witnesses surrounding us to teach us many lessons about how things in this world can destroy us. Many people are suffering, and many lives have been destroyed because they are running away from the Lord.