

13TH SUNDAY ORD. (C) CALLED TO SERVE THE LORD

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, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, just to mention a few. Today, we hear about the call of Elisha to succeed Elijah as a prophet. He 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.

We heard in the gospel that when Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, someone expressed a desire to follow Him, and He told him that the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head. He called others to follow Him, but they started giving excuses. In response to their concerns, He revealed to them the cost of being His disciple. He told them about the need to abandon one's self and everything which may be obstacles in their ways to be faithful followers. He told them about the need to detach one's self from earthly things and even close relatives.

It may seem that being called to follow the Lord is all about losing one's freedom and happiness. 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". It is when we attach ourselves to earthly things and people that we become enslaved to them.

Every Christian has been called to serve the Lord. Some have responded, but many have yet to respond because even though we have received baptism, we are yet to commit ourselves to Jesus. Our hands are on the plough but we are still looking back. We are finding all kinds of excuses to explain why we are not committed Catholics; because someone has done or said this or that, and many other reasons best known to them. Like John and James, we are filled with envy and hatred and want to destroy others. Each is called to love and serve. St. Paul again tells us that we should not use the freedom we have been called to as an opportunity to bite and devour one another; rather we are to serve one

another through love.

I have to ask myself all the time whether I have responded to God's call to be His ambassador by what I do every day. The call to follow the Lord is not a one-day affair; it is a whole life affair. That was why Elisha sacrificed his oxen and followed his master. And Jesus also made it clear to the would-be-disciples what it entails to follow Him.

How am I living in freedom? Am I enslaved by somebody or something? Am I led by the Spirit to do what I do and say what I say? Is God the only Master I have or do I have others? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon," (Mt.6:24). To follow the Lord is to find freedom and peace; to follow the flesh and the world leads to enslavement and self-destruction.

There are many witnesses surrounding us to teach us many lessons about how things in this world can destroy us. The Lord calls everybody to follow Him no matter who you are. Those He called were not extraordinary people, but ordinary and common people: Moses was a murderer, Elisha was a farmer like Amos who was a sycamore tree dresser; Matthew was a tax-collector, and the list can go on. We are the prophets and apostles of our time. You and I are to carry God's message to the people. You are the Elisha of today, so am I; you and I are John and James, and Peter and Matthew, to proclaim God's word.