

(Food for thought: Gospel Luke 9:51-62)

# Hands to the Plow



From the Scripture we hear today and in so many others, the call to discipleship comes in the ordinariness of our lives, along the road or, like Elisha, while we are plowing, busy about our day's work: teaching a class; waiting on tables; straightening our desk; turning on the computer; answering the phone; sitting at the reception desk; tending to our children. In one way or another, the invitation to "Follow Him" comes every day - it is very present tense - and it suggests that we pause, listen for a moment, wonder what we must stop doing and how we can respond.

It is this kind of unselfish love that propels people into lives of service and ministry, into marriage and family, into priesthood and religious life. It is this kind of commitment to the Lord that is put to the test by the trials of life - sickness, failure, natural disasters, the death of our loved ones. We get to understand what "dying to self" means

when our patience is tried to the breaking point by a rebellious teenager, or an irresponsible spouse, or the death of a loved one. We are asked to give up our own lives in favor of a parent suffering with Alzheimer, or a victim of AIDS, or someone close to us who is being destroyed by drugs or alcohol.

The true follower of Jesus is not surprised, or angered, or lost in despair when this happens. To walk in the footsteps of the Master means to put aside self, willingly, generously, and with absolute trust. It means giving without measuring the cost. It means putting our hands to the plow and not looking back. It means putting on Christ, allowing him to live in us and through us. By His grace, we deny self, we lose our life... but we are absolutely certain that with Him we shall inherit the fullness of life and happiness, forever. St. Paul tells us: "For freedom, Christ has set us free." Freedom from death and sin. Freedom to Love; freedom to live. What we know to be absolutely true is that our response to Jesus' invitation involves us for the long haul and it will require sacrifice. We also know that his call and our faithfulness to it, is totally liberating: it gives us vision; focuses our energies and opens us to give ourselves

generously and freely to the kingdom which Christ came to proclaim.

