



## CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

*Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation*

June 30, 2013

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### **Gospel reading Luke 9:51-62** [*To be read aloud*]

When the days for Jesus' being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, and he sent messengers ahead of him. On the way they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they journeyed to another village. As they were proceeding on their journey someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head." And to another he said, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, let me go first and bury my father." But he answered him, "Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." And another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home." To him Jesus said, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."

### **Brief commentary:**

Continuing the great themes of Ordinary Time, journey, mission, witness, and discipleship, today's rather concise gospel reading seems to contain them all. Typical of the gospel of Luke, we find Jesus on a journey. And in Luke, Jesus' great journey is the one he 'determines resolutely' to take – the one to Jerusalem – which will culminate in him "being taken up" on the cross, his resurrection and ascension. His journey, indeed his whole life, is one characterized by the passion and zeal of mission. As a Jew, he could have desired to avoid Samaritan territory, which tended to be unwelcoming to Jews. Yet, as a social barrier-breaker and as someone who really loves people *as people*, Jesus is very willing to travel that route and meet with Samaritans, but he faces customary opposition particularly since his destination is Jerusalem. (In rejection of Jerusalem with its Temple to Yahweh, for centuries Samaritans chose Mount Gerizim, with its modest temple, as the holy place of the worship of God. Jesus, instead – we learn from John's gospel – taught a more universal place of worship...a devout, sincere, and humble human heart: "God seeks those who worship him in spirit and in truth.") The reaction of Jesus and his disciples over the inhospitality of the villagers could not have been more starkly different. His disciples, feeling offended, wanted to curse the Samaritans; but Jesus firmly "rebuked them." Jesus respects the feelings of the Samaritans, has good will toward them, cares about them, and is unwilling to turn his Gospel of freedom into an imposition on anyone. Jesus and his apostles are instead to be witnesses of the redeeming love of God for people. They simply traveled to another – perhaps Jewish, perhaps Samaritan – village. The text concludes with a list of sayings about discipleship, each offering a glimpse into its conditions. Discipleship involves sacrifices such as Jesus was willing to make, which involved putting aside creature comforts. It involves placing the cause of the proclamation of the kingdom of God as the highest priority, and of a resolute decision to follow Jesus that does hesitate or look back. Journey, mission, witness, and discipleship – all central themes in the gospels; and with God's grace we can embrace each of these themes today and in the days and weeks ahead. To each of us Jesus calls out and says, "Follow me." Without turning back or even hesitating, without putting hurdles in the way or other priorities, and by putting comforts aside that in our society and times we prize so much, but which weaken us so much as Christians, let us respond to him decisively: "Yes Lord Jesus Christ, I will follow you and I will go wherever you lead. I will live your Gospel intensely and accomplish the will of the heavenly Father *in* the world and *for* the world!"

### **Today's reading offers significant messages:**

- The Gospels offer the central themes of Christian identity, faith and life. Throughout Ordinary Time the Gospel themes of journey, mission, witness and discipleship stand out for our reflection and action.
- Jesus' mission is open to all, and all are free to respond to him and his message. Instead of rebuking the Samaritan attitudes toward his Jewish practices, Jesus rebukes his disciples for wanting to take revenge on their inhospitality. Jesus' disciples must learn to see, think and act like him who is their Teacher.
- Following Jesus, who forewent comforts and endured difficulties for the sake of the Kingdom of God, his disciples must be willing to wholeheartedly seek the cause of the Kingdom above all else.

### **For our shared or personal reflection:**

*After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.*

- What is the meaning of being a Christian and how are the gospels central to this question?
- Do I know what the mission of the Church is? Am I aware of what my mission is as a Christian?
- What are the creature comforts or hurdles which prevent me from a more radical, resolute and wholehearted devotion to the cause of the Gospel and of the Kingdom of God?

*Suggested readings:* *Catechism of the Catholic Church* paragraphs 1691-98