



CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Office of Lay Ministry

June 26, 2016

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:

Journeys are common and important in the Bible, and Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem became the occasion for learning more about the meaning of following him as his disciples on the journey of life. Jesus is on his mission and is met with welcome, rejection and opposition. James and John act impetuously as they call for revenge upon those who reject him; but Jesus instead "turned and rebuked them." Jesus would not have anything with coercion, revenge, forced conversions, as at times Christians have mistakenly done toward others. The Jesus of the gospels resolutely rejects forced adherence. Following him is to be done freely or not at all. Following him may involve much more than privation of creature comforts, it may involve displacement and exclusion, rejection and persecution. Rather than sugarcoating the facts, Jesus is very forthright.

For Jesus, responding to his gospel, joining him and announcing the kingdom of God involves decisiveness rather than the indecision of 'looking back'. Following Jesus involves daring faith, hope and love. The disciples in the gospels, however, give us some degree of consolation in our own weaknesses – for they were weak, but Jesus was patient with them and instead trusted them and involved them even more in his mission. To us, as he did to the people in today's gospel, Jesus invites us: "Follow me."

Today's reading offers significant messages:

- The Jesus of the gospels is a dynamic person with total commitment to the mission of the kingdom of God, which means redemption and new life for all. He is on the journey, and many are inspired to follow him.
- Just as Jesus met with opposition, so should his disciples expect the same. Jesus was not lavished with a palatial life, but instead "had nowhere to lay his head."
- Following Jesus involves resolute faith and commitment; yet, we can learn from his disciples that it does not require perfection. Jesus Christ believes in us and depends on us in spite of our many weaknesses and inconsistencies.

For our shared or personal reflection:

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

- What does following Jesus Christ involve? What does it involve for me?
- How have I experienced difficulties as a result of being a Christian?
- Paul often wrote about relying on God's grace and not being distraught by his weaknesses. Am I patient with myself and my weaknesses as Jesus is?

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