**THEME:** THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

**READINGS:** 1 Kings 19:16, 19-21 / Gal. 5:1, 13-18 / Luke 9:51-62

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Last Sunday’s gospel reading concluded with Jesus Christ stating that there is a high cost in becoming His follower or disciple: ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it’ (Luke 9:23-24). The cost of discipleship, therefore, involves giving up or losing something.

Today’s gospel reading in turn gives us three instances in which Jesus tells some would-be disciples to give up something in order to follow Him (Luke 9:57-62). From each of these instances let’s pick out two brief lessons for ourselves:

1. FOXES HAVE HOLES, AND BIRDS OF THE AIR HAVE NESTS; BUT THE SON OF MAN HAS NO WHERE TO LAY HIS HEAD (Luke 9:58)
   1. This statement means that following Christ is not a life of luxury; rather it is a demanding enterprise. This affirms the earlier call to deny oneself, take up the cross daily, and follow Christ. Unfortunately, this is not a theme stressed by many preachers today; what is often emphasized is that the one who follows Christ overcomes every trouble or challenge in this life. May God grant us the grace to give up a luxury of life whenever He demands it, amen!
   2. Secondly, if while He lived and ministered on this earth, our Lord and Master had ‘no where to lay His head’, then following Him is not a guarantee that all our material or physical needs will be provided by God. Once again, this is a message often overlooked by the ‘prosperity preachers’. The focus or goal of the disciple of Christ is first and foremost to enter God’s kingdom, for ‘what good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?’ (Matt. 16:26).
2. LET THE DEAD BURY THEIR OWN DEAD, BUT YOU GO AND PROCLAIM THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Luke 9: 60).
   1. It is said that probably the man’s father was yet to die, but he felt he would have the time and freedom to follow Christ only after the future death and burial of his father (W. Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Luke*, p. 131). Christ, on the other hand, told him that following Him is an urgent call; and it involves the urgent task of proclaiming the kingdom of God. It therefore supersedes all social obligations. Often we have used the obligations or demands of family life, work, studies, etc. to excuse ourselves from being active in the service of the Lord and His church. To proclaim the good news by word and deed is paramount and must be done at all times, in every place (e.g. workplace, school) and in every circumstance (e.g. family).
   2. Another lesson is that we cannot tell our Lord that we would follow Him provided He fulfills certain conditions in our lives. A student, for instance, cannot tell the Lord that he will dedicate his whole life to Him as a priest in the future, provided He blesses him with excellent exam results. Similarly, a young lady cannot say that she will be active in the church only after the Lord has blessed her with a marriage. Our calling is to follow the Lord unreservedly, while it is His prerogative to bless us according to His Divine wisdom and loving mercy. May the Lord grant us the grace to give up any conditions we have set before Him, amen!
3. NO ONE WHO PUTS A HAND TO THE PLOUGH AND LOOKS BACK IS FIT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Luke 9:62)

3.1 Imagine someone driving on the highway while looking backward – that would be a recipe for disaster. Similarly, when Lot’s wife looked back at the burning cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (probably because she could not withstand the loss of their property) she turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:12-26). By the above statement, therefore, Jesus cautions us against the disastrous end of backsliding – of returning to our old ways of life.

3.2 On the other hand, to follow Christ is like looking forward in the direction of the plough one is pushing it. That is, following Christ is a life-long commitment pursued with steadfast faith and love. The Lord rewards such love and faith-filled commitment with eternal life. May the Spirit of the Lord renew our commitment and grant us the graces to be ever faithful to God, amen!