



Living the Gospel



Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — June 27, 2010

Theme: “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening; you have the words of everlasting life.”

Gathering Prayer

All: Father, you call your children to walk in the light of Christ. Free us from darkness and keep us in the radiance of your truth. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Luke 9:51-62

⁵¹ Now it happened that as the time drew near for him to be taken up, he resolutely turned his face towards Jerusalem ⁵² and sent messengers ahead of him. These set out, and they went into a Samaritan village to make preparations for him, ⁵³ but the people would not receive him because he was making for Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ Seeing this, the disciples James and John said, 'Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to burn them up?' ⁵⁵ But he turned and rebuked them, ⁵⁶ and they went on to another village ⁵⁷ As they travelled along they met a man on the road who said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' ⁵⁸ Jesus answered, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.' ⁵⁹ Another to whom he said, 'Follow me,' replied, 'Let me go and bury my father first.' ⁶⁰ But he answered, 'Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.' Another said, 'I will follow you, sir, but first let me go and say good -- bye to my people at home.' ⁶² Jesus said to him, 'Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

Gospel Notes

51. "When the days drew near for him to be received up": these words refer to the moment when Jesus will leave this world and ascend into heaven. Our Lord will say this more explicitly during the Last Supper: "I come from the Father and have come into the world; again; I am leaving the world and going to the Father" (Jn 16:28). By making his way resolutely to Jerusalem, towards his Cross, Jesus freely complies with his Father's plan for his passion and death to be the route to his resurrection and ascension.

52-53. The Samaritans were hostile towards the Jews. This enmity derived from the fact that the Samaritans were descendents of marriages of Jews with Gentiles who repopulated the region of Samaria at the time of the Assyrian captivity (in the eighth century before Christ). There were also religious differences: the Samaritans had mixed the religion of Moses with various superstitious practices, and did not accept the temple of Jerusalem as the only place where sacrifices could properly be offered. They built their own temple on Mount Gerizim, in opposition to Jerusalem (cf. Jn 4:20); this was why, when they realized that Jesus was headed for the Holy City, they refused him hospitality.

54-56. Jesus corrects his disciples' desire for revenge, because it is out of keeping with the mission of the Messiah, who has come to save men, not destroy them (cf. Lk 19:10; Jn 12:47). The Apostles are gradually learning that zeal for the things of God should not be bitter or violent.

"The Lord does everything in an admirable way [...]. He acts in this way to teach us that perfect virtue retains no desire for vengeance, and that where there is true charity there is no room for anger-in other words, that weakness should not be treated with harshness but should be helped. Indignation should be very far from holy souls, and desire for vengeance very far from great souls" (St Ambrose, *Exposito Evangelii sec. Lucam, in loc.*).

An RSV footnote after the word "rebuked" in v.55 points out that "other ancient authorities add *...and he said 'You do not know what manner of Spirit you are of; for the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them'.*" These words appear in a considerable number of MSS, and other versions and were included in the Clementine Vulgate; but they do not appear in the best and oldest Greek codexes and have not been included in the New Vulgate.

57-62. Our Lord spells out very clearly what is involved in following him. Being a Christian is not an easy or comfortable affair: it calls for self-denial and for putting God before everything else.

We see here the case of the man who wanted to follow Christ, but on one condition—that he be allowed to say good bye to his family. Our Lord, seeing that he is rather undecided, gives him an answer that applies to all of us, for we have all received a calling to follow him and we have to try not to receive this grace in vain. “We receive the grace of God in vain, when we receive it at the gate of our hearts, but do not let it enter. We receive it without receiving it i.e., we receive it without fruit, since there is no advantage in feeling the inspiration without accepting it [...]. It sometimes happens that after having being inspired to do much we consent not to the whole inspiration but only to some part of it. Like some good people in the Gospel, who once inspired by our Lord to follow him wished to make reservations, one to go first and bury his father, the other to go to take leave of his people” (St Francis de Sales. *Treatise on the Love of God*, book 2, chap. 11).

Our loyalty and fidelity to the mission God has given us should equip us to deal with every obstacle we meet: “There is never reason to look back (cf. Lk9:62). The Lord is at our side. We have to be faithful and loyal; we have to face up to our obligations and we will find in Jesus the love and the stimulus we need to understand other people’s faults and overcome our own” (Bl. J. Escriva, *Christ is passing by*, 160).

Gospel Reflection

Many of us need a push to dive into something demanding, be it an unpleasant task, a tedious long and boring job, or patching up a relationship gone awry. Sometimes just trying to motivate ourselves for various kinds of tasks is a hard sell. This is so common that we have a number of sayings we use in this regard: bite the bullet; go, team, go; set our hand to the plow; move, darn it. Motivation and persistence aren’t traits that come naturally to many of us. We need an extra “push” to get moving. The gospel of this Sunday is about a journey, but the end isn’t something anyone would choose. It truly takes motivation to undergo this journey and stay the course. It definitely takes a push to get started, and much more than that to keep going. What kind of a journey is this?

The beginning of the gospel sets the tone for this selection: Jesus “resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem.” This might seem like a pleasant enough journey until we consider that here “Jerusalem” is a metaphor for death, the end of life’s journey-but also for new life. Jesus invites us on this journey. We know the cost, even as we also know the new life that awaits us. We need to get started, and help to stay on an unswerving path. Jesus is there to be that help.

This gospel depicts various responses to and interactions with Jesus: some refuse him entrance into their village; some naively swear to follow wherever he leads and some put exigencies of life ahead of following him. Each response suggests that people has some sense of cost of following Jesus. Throughout, Jesus consistently indicates that those who follow him must separate themselves from anything that hinders their resolutely journeying with him through death to new life. The price is high but so are the stakes and so is the reward.

The challenge of this gospel is for us to be resolutely determined to accept the dying to self that is necessary to follow Jesus and cooperate with him in establishing God’s reign, just as Jesus was resolutely determined to go to his own suffering and death. We can be neither naïve nor self-excusing. To be “fit for the kingdom of God” we must keep our eyes on Jesus and our destiny. We must let him be our motivation to stay the course. The course: Jerusalem. The price: dying. The stakes: new life. This is surely all the motivation we could possibly need: following Jesus brings new life.

Living the Paschal Mystery

The context for this Sunday's gospel is that Jesus is "resolutely determined" to go to Jerusalem and this sets the tone for the next months of Ordinary Time. On our own journey to the end of the liturgical year in November (hardly on our minds at this point in June!) we must be resolute on hearing the gospel faithfully and following Jesus, even when that means we, too, are going to "Jerusalem," which symbolizes ongoing dying to self that is what living the paschal mystery really is.

We hear the gospel faithfully when that gospel is lived in our everyday circumstances. Hearing is more than words going into our ears; it demands of us resolute action. The gospels often are challenging. This one challenges us to go to Jerusalem with Jesus, and by being his faithful followers "the kingdom of God" is at hand through us. This ought to be all the motivation we need!

New and Old Testament links

First Reading — 1 Kings 19:16, 19-21

¹⁶ You must anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat, of Abel-Meholah, as prophet to succeed you.

¹⁹ Leaving there, he came on Elisha son of Shaphat as he was ploughing behind twelve yoke of oxen, he himself being with the twelfth. Elijah passed near to him and threw his cloak over him. ²⁰ Elisha left his oxen and ran after Elijah. 'Let me kiss my father and mother, then I will follow you,' he said. Elijah answered, 'Go, go back; for have I done anything to you?' ²¹ Elisha turned away, took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He used the oxen's tackle for cooking the meat, which he gave the people to eat. He then rose and, following Elijah, became his servant.

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

¹ [In a quiet voice Of David] Protect me, O God, in you is my refuge
² To Yahweh I say, 'You are my Lord, my happiness is in none ⁵ My
birthright, my cup is Yahweh; you, you alone, hold my lot secure. ⁷
I bless Yahweh who is my counselor, even at night my heart
instructs me ⁸ I keep Yahweh before me always, for with him at my
right hand, nothing can shake me. ⁹ So my heart rejoices, my soul
delights, my body too will rest secure, ¹⁰ for you will not abandon
me to Sheol, you cannot allow your faithful servant to see the
abyss. ¹¹ You will teach me the path of life, unbounded joy in your
presence, at your right hand delight for ever.

Second Reading — Galatians 5:1, 13-18

¹ Christ set us free, so that we should remain free. Stand firm,
then, and do not let yourselves be fastened again to the yoke of
slavery. ¹³ After all, brothers, you were called to be free; do not use
your freedom as an opening for self-indulgence, but be servants to
one another in love, ¹⁴ since the whole of the Law is summarised in
the one commandment: You must love your neighbour as yourself.
¹⁵ If you go snapping at one another and tearing one another to
pieces, take care: you will be eaten up by one another. ¹⁶ Instead, I
tell you, be guided by the Spirit, and you will no longer yield to self-
indulgence ¹⁷ The desires of self-indulgence are always in
opposition to the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are in
opposition to self-indulgence: they are opposites, one against the
other; that is how you are prevented from doing the things that you
want to. ¹⁸ But when you are led by the Spirit, you are not under
the Law.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

544. The kingdom belongs *to the poor and lowly*, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor"; (*Lk* 4:18; cf. 7:22.) he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (*Mt* 5:3) To them - the "little ones" the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned. (Cf. *Mt* 11:25) Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation. (Cf. *Mt* 21:18; *Mk* 2:23-26; *Jn* 4:6-7; 19:28; *Lk* 9:58.) Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom. (Cf. *Mt* 25:31-46.)

557. "When the days drew near for him to be taken up [Jesus] set

his face to go to Jerusalem."(*Lk* 9:51; cf. *Jn* 13:1.) By this decision he indicated that he was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there. Three times he had announced his Passion and Resurrection; now, heading toward Jerusalem, Jesus says: "It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."(*Lk* 13:33; cf. *Mk* 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:32-34.)

Sharing and Discussion

1. How does knowing that Jesus' face was set to go to Jerusalem to endure the impending sacrifice, help explain his statements to those who lightly said, "I will follow you wherever you go ?
2. If you said, "I will follow you wherever you go," what cost would Jesus call to your attention?"
3. To what extent do you feel that Christ is calling you to follow him in an extraordinary way?

Closing Prayer

All: Gracious God, you desire that your kingdom of justice and peace be established throughout the world: hear these prayers that one day we might enjoy everlasting life in the kingdom of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

Salvation Story

Understanding how the collection of people, proceedings and places fit together can be a daunting task for most of us. The Holy Cross Bible Ministry invites you to experience Salvation Story of '*The GREAT Adventure - A journey through the Bible*' - an 8 week program that covers Salvation History from its beginning in Genesis, through the coming of Christ and the establishment of the Church. **Come join us** as we study this immensely rich story and dwell into the 14 narrative books of the Bible - a story that promises to both fascinate the young novice yet challenge the Bible study veteran.

Starting: Monday 26th July: 7:45pm - 9:30 pm,
Or Wednesday 28th July, 2010, 10am to 11.45am.

Saturday 10am – 12nn at Church of The Holy Cross (room #03-06)

Contacts:

George Chee: georgejc@gmail.com - 97399216

Anthony Lim : am32lim@singnet.com.sg

References:-

The Navarre Bible – Commentaries;

Living Liturgy – Liturgical Ministry, The Liturgical Press;

Emmaus Journey – www.emmausjourney.org