

June 28, 2020      Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily

On this last Sunday in June, with the temperatures rising as well as the humidity, the “*cup of cold water*” that Jesus listed among His directives for what faithful disciples should be willing to do for others might be more of a necessity on a day like this than an act of charity. However these temperatures and humidity levels are what we usually look forward to in these days that are a part of “the good ole summertime” we look forward to all year. And even though the restrictions and all the social distancing protocols that we still have to observe, will definitely impact the way we are able to enjoy these summer days, the fact is that they are here, and we will take advantage of them, one way or another.

Today’s Scripture Readings focus our attention in general on the importance of hospitality extended to others as an expression of our Faith in God, and as part of what it means to be a Disciple of Jesus.

In today’s First Reading from the Second Book of Kings, we heard about Elisha, the “*prophet of God*” who was shown great kindness and hospitality by a woman of means and her husband, just because he was a “prophet of God”. However, we saw that Elisha expressed his gratitude by asking God to bless this woman, who was childless, with a precious baby as a reward for her great kindness.

The Gospel Reading we just heard is the passage that follows immediately upon last Sunday’s Gospel, in which Jesus was instructing His disciples on how to be prepared for the first missionary journey on which He was sending them. Remember what He told them last week that was most important? He told them: “*Do not be afraid.*” He told them “*to fear no one or nothing*”, for He would be with them. In today’s passage, Jesus continues that message with a series of 10 statements about what they should do for “*whoever*” they encounter. But even more important than those particular directives, Jesus is challenging us to review what our life priorities are.

If by chance any of us may have the opportunity to get away for a vacation somewhere even during these very unusual and unpredictable days, before we would actually set out on the trip there, we would have to make a plan. We

would have to decide where we are going, who is going, what will we need to take with us, how much time do we have, what will the expenses be? In other words we prioritize, to decide what we need to take, and leave behind what is unnecessary. In the same way, that's what we need to do when we think about our spiritual lives; we need to have a "plan" as well: to know that our time in this world is temporary, and that our ultimate destination, or goal, in life is to get to Heaven, to be with God. For that reason, God must be our first priority in our life!

That's what Jesus is telling us today as well: whoever is focused on something else and not on the final goal; whoever is more interested in other people or places along the way, and doesn't give full attention, and all our love, to God Who is our ultimate destination, will get lost along the way. Jesus is not being harsh with what He tells us; He is certainly not suggesting that loving our mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, or dear friends is not important. What He is saying is as important as they are, we must love God even more, and know that to stay on the right path along our life journey to take us to God is the most important priority in our lifetime.

So on this last Sunday in June, in the midst of this "good ole, but dramatically different, summertime", and while we enjoy all the opportunities to be hospitable to one another and to express our love for those in our lives who are so important to us, Jesus simply asks us to check on our "spiritual life's priorities". Love of God is primary, and that of course leads directly to love of neighbor, which of course results in care and love for ourselves. How do we love God? One of the ways we express that is by participating in this beautiful celebration of the Eucharist, giving our praise and thanksgiving to God in our public worship, but also in our private prayers. Another way we express our love for God is in our loving acts of kindness, our works of charity, our expressions of hospitality, and our attitudes of compassion for others. We do so by living our lives according to the Beatitudes, in doing all that we can to make God's Kingdom of justice, love and peace be the reality in our world, rather than giving in and allowing our society to continue to devolve by the growing acts of violence, and the deep divisions of disagreement we are witnessing all around us. When we love God with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength, then, fully aware of who we are as God's sons and daughters, we will love, care about, reach out to, work to be one with, all those others in our lives: our mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, and dear friends, including even the strangers among us, as well as our enemies.

St. Paul told us in today's Second Reading that in Baptism, "*we live in newness of life*". Today would be a good time to step back, reflect on our lives, examine our priorities, and make sure that loving God is at the top of our list. When God is in His rightful place, then we can work to make sure that we are also in the "right places" with one another. As we reach out and give that symbolic "*cup of cold water*" to one who is thirsty, especially on a hot day like today, we in turn will receive our reward: God's blessing, in this life, but even more importantly, in the Life to come.

God bless you, now and always.