

Homily by Fr. Anthony Davis

“...Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward.”

June 28, 2020

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

2 Kgs 4:8-11, 14-16a; Rom 6:3-4, 8-11; Mt 10:37-42

The common theme of today’s readings is the work God gives us to do as the followers of Jesus: to love God and our brothers and sisters through hospitality, generosity, commitment, and charity. They also remind us of the sacrifice demanded of Jesus’ disciples and the suffering they will endure for their Faith when they bear witness to him.

The 1st reading, which teaches us about hospitality, tenacity and gratitude, talks about a “woman of influence” from Shunem who shows hospitality and kindness to the prophet Elisha, seeking nothing from him. In return, Elisha shows gratitude and promises her to conceive: “This time next year you will be fondling a baby son.” The promise came to pass and was fulfilled by God! And as the narrative continues beyond today’s reading, she gives birth to this miraculous child. The child grows up but then dies suddenly. The woman seeks help and persistently implores the Prophet Elisha to restore her son to her, who ultimately revives him.

The Gospel reading echoes these themes of hospitality and prophetic power. Jesus proclaims, “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward” (Mt 10:40-41).

This message anticipates that some people will in fact reject the apostles and the message of the Gospel. This notwithstanding, Jesus highlights the value of accepting the good news. Open reception of Jesus’ followers will enable people to receive Christ, and through him the Father in heaven. Moreover, Jesus connects prophetic actions, like his miraculous deeds that recall those of Elisha and Elijah, with receiving rewards: “...And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink...he will surely not lose his reward.”

However, in addition to these benefits, Jesus expounds on the demands and difficult decisions his followers will face. Jesus requires them to love him more than their own parents and children. These words may sound a bit extreme, since family comes first for most of us. But what Jesus means here is that “ALL LOYALTIES MUST GIVE PLACE TO LOYALTY TO GOD”.

Hence, the wants of any person or any group of people (e.g. a family), cannot be met by trampling on or denying the rights and needs of others. So if members of one’s family act

unjustly, one must, in conscience, separate oneself from them. In other words, one cannot condone immoral practices even by members of one's family. Hence Jesus clearly is not attacking family life. Rather He is, admonishing his disciples of the eminent conflicts and misunderstandings they will experience through their living out the word and their faith, and thus becoming prophets, proclaiming God's Will and living presence among His people.

Likewise, they must "take up their cross," which involves acts of self-sacrifice. Jesus even alludes to martyrdom by affirming that people who lose their lives on account of their belief in him will have eternal life - an idea that is also stressed in the 2nd reading: "...Buried with Christ in baptism, we too, shall walk in the newness of life."

Encapsulating all this I would say that, the rewards for accepting the Gospel are awesome, but the demands are hefty. Jesus wants his followers to recognize fully the implications of their decision to believe. Belief/Discipleship is not passive or easy!! It is an active engagement with God and community - Yes "FOR GOD AND COUNTRY"!

Devoting oneself to God will result in a life of sacrifice for the sake of others. Therefore today, Jesus previews the work of true discipleship and invites us his followers to imitate him, while recognizing the benefits and challenges we might encounter.