

Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time-C

Lk 9:51-62

Dear Friends,

We have just finished an extensive celebration of the great event of our faith, God's love revealed in the Pascal Mystery. This is Christ's death and resurrection. We now return to Ordinary Time. We are entering into the Gospel of Luke to meet Jesus. We bring our lives, with our joys and sorrows, to this encounter. Our hope is to see God's presence and call that will guide our daily experience.

Today's gospel reveals Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. This takes ten full chapters in Luke. It is almost like a gospel within a gospel in the depth and breadth of its message. It consists mostly of teachings by Jesus with only a few miracles during this time. Jesus has grown in awareness that the depth of his conflict with the leaders will demand a total commitment. This faithfulness to the Father's will and mission will likely lead to death. This is what Luke means when he says, **"he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem"** (Lk 9:51).

The concept of journey or pilgrimage is a common pattern in the Bible. It reveals how we experience God. It demands a singleness of purpose. It is definitely a one-way ticket.

In today's gospel passage Jesus talks about the requirements for this journey. These are the demands of discipleship. The first is to let go of revenge. Jesús's disciples on the journey are to be people of tolerance who forsake the natural lure for violence. Secondly, the disciples must surrender the comfort and convenience of their past ways. The deeply human desire to settle down with clear boundaries and to be in control has to be forsaken. Jesus is not into mortgages. His is the way of letting go in the uprooting experience of pilgrimage. Thirdly, Jesus demands an allegiance that does not accept any delay. The choice is to walk to Jerusalem now. Too often, we hope to avoid the walking. We want the luxury of the next train. Jesus is not into shortcuts. There seldom is a next train.

We are called to make a decision. The rules of the journey to Jerusalem demand a discipline that is both challenging and comforting. We are called to walk with Jesus. This is the fundamental choice of the Christian life. Like so many other biblical passages, this teaching has been distorted over the centuries. Jesus does not want to cutoff responsible relations to families or others. He simply wants to put them in order. God comes first.

Discipleship, the main message of today's gospel, means we are entering a relationship. We begin that relationship by the first step. God always takes us where we are. There will be many more steps to follow but without the first step nothing happens.

We need to let go of anything that will be an obstacle to our choice for Jesus. On our way to Jerusalem, we will slowly see, with a growing clarity, the many demands of this commitment. Everything will eventually be brought to the surface. We will grow in our ability to determine whether our actions, possessions and relationships either help or hinder our choice of Jesus. We will learn that we cannot turn back.