

Homily  
13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
6/30/19

Today's readings are a bit confusing. We have our first reading from the book of Kings, and Elijah goes and calls Elisha, and Elisha says, "Please let me go and kiss my father and mother goodbye, then I'll follow you." And Elijah says, "Fine. have I kept you from doing this?" But in today's Gospel, Jesus says come follow me, and the man says "Wait, let me go bury my father." And Jesus says, "Let the dead bury the dead." And another says, "Wait, let me go back and say goodbye to my parents!" To which Jesus says, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not worthy of the kingdom of God."

Is anyone else confused about the different readings we have today and the different tones of those readings? It's really difficult for us to see where God is leading us if we don't pay attention. Because in our second reading today from St Paul to the Galatians, he kind of opens for us this contradiction that we have between our first and second reading. He says that in this one line we can see the totality of the law: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Now what's interesting is, we do that rather well. We tend to love our neighbors very much as we love ourselves. The problem is we struggle to love ourselves. We really struggle to love our neighbor at times. We love them just as much as we love ourselves. Many times that's why we fall to envy, we fall to jealousy, that's why we fall to pettiness of heart because we see others succeeding, and we look at ourselves and say, "God, why haven't You let me succeed?" Well, He has. He's given you though a different set of gifts, a different set of talents, a different set of skills. Use what He's given you and let them use what He gave them.

But we then get upset and feel a little bit of turmoil within us and we just don't understand. Just like the apostles many times went to Jesus and Jesus then responded, "Do you still not understand?" Basically what He's doing is He's calling each and every one of us to love Him. But it's hard for us to love if we don't accept love first. In all three of our readings today, we see a calling from God to humanity and we see different levels of response when people are called.

Yesterday we had five guys that listened to that call and responded the same way that Elijah did, "Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening. You have the

words of eternal life.” We are blessed to have five new ordinands, five newly ordained priests in our diocese as of yesterday. Eight new priests in Oklahoma. There were three ordinations in the diocese of Tulsa yesterday as well. It’s one of the biggest weekends we’ve had in the state of Oklahoma probably in 35 years.

But we go on with our lives. We don’t think about it. We don’t realize that God is still pouring His love upon us. “Yes, that’s important, Father, that’s good and all, but what does that have to do with me?” Well, that means that we have priests to continue on with the sacraments. I will not be here forever, and I’m not just talking about here in the parish. I’m going to die someday. One of the things they tell us in the seminary is what you’re probably told in your job. You can’t leave and you can’t retire until you find someone to replace you. We still need about another 25 to be able to just maintain what we have now.

So we shouldn’t just rest on our laurels, but continue to embrace God’s word. Continue to embrace the call that each and every one of us has from Him. God is calling each and every one of us to follow Him, but what excuses are we using today? “Oh but Lord, I’ve got my family I’ve got to take care of, I’ve got a job, I just lost my job, I’ve got land I need to sell, I’ve got this going on in my life, I’m sick, I don’t feel good, I’ve got surgery...” The list goes on and on and on. It would be easy for us to make excuses.

Let me go kiss my mother and my father. Let me go bury my father. which are the same excuses we hear in Scriptures. Though valid, definitely, I want to say goodbye to my family. Well, when a man marries his wife, he shall leave his father and his mother, and he shall take his wife and they shall become one body. These are all kind of lining up with the calls that God has for us whether its married life, to the ordained or religious life, or the single life, God is calling us each to that initial vocation. And so we need to respond to that call.

But once we respond to that call, can we allow God to continue to allow God to call us. To embrace that call every day, because you who are married know that you can’t just say “I do” at your marriage. You have to say it every day. Because if you don’t say I do, Satan would use that to sow the doubt of do I really? Do I really want to? I mean it’s not an easy day today because my husband/wife yelled at me this morning, my kids are driving me crazy. It would be so much easier to be single and not have to worry about this craziness when I get home from work. In all of these things that if we allow him to get in, Satan would take over.

If we embrace God's call every single day the best that we're able to, Satan has no hope. Satan has no things to play with. But it means us being intentional every day to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, with all of our mind with all of our soul, with all of our strength and then to love our neighbor as ourselves. But we can only love our neighbor as ourselves as it is said here in the book of Galatians, if we first accept God's love for us. Because if we don't, we then project onto others how we feel about ourselves.

Working in a high school, I recognize that 99.99999% of humanity has struggles with self-esteem. Has anybody here ever not liked themselves? (rhetorical question, you don't need to raise your hands) Then you are loving your neighbors many times as yourselves. But how do we do more than that? How do we embrace the you that you are? The you that God made you to be?

God made you in His image and likeness, perfect as *you* are, not perfect as the person you want to be, not perfect as the person others want you to be, but perfect *as you are*. Embrace that, my brothers and sisters, and happiness can flow. And until we embrace that goodness that lies within, that goodness that comes from God, it's difficult for us to love others. It's impossible for us to love others.

Many times we are our greatest critics, which means we're everyone else's greatest critics as well. "If I can't have a great day, then he shouldn't have a great day either! Poo poo on your day!" It's kind of how we look at it sometimes. I remember growing up and learning about family systems theory and hearing the word deference. And transference. And being like, "What are you talking about?" If I'm having a bad day, and I come into a room and someone's all cheery...grrr. If you're not a morning person: Good morning Father!!! good morning. I'm doing Great!! How are you today?!! I'm alive. Many times that's how we transfer how we're feeling onto others. Or if you're a night person: Hey, how are you doin' tonight? I'm still here...falling asleep at the end of the night at about 7:30 at night.

We all have these different temperaments throughout the day. But how do we, no matter how we're feeling on the inside, project God's love on the outside? If I'm not feeling great today, I can say, "You know what, I'm not feeling all that great today, but I know that with God all things are possible." I know that with God no matter how badly I'm feeling internally, I'm still called to project God's love. I'm still called to project God's happiness, and I'm not talking about putting on a fake mask – that's not what I'm saying.

What I'm saying is how do we not allow these obstacles, these struggles we have in our lives, to change who we are. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, we were taught this false notion growing up: God will never give you more than you can handle. No, God will many times give you more than you can handle so that you have to realize that you cannot rely on yourself. We are each called to pick up our cross and follow Him. He never said to do it by yourself though. In fact, Christ Himself, on His way to Calvary, couldn't bear the weight of His cross, and He needed Simon to pick up some of the weight and help Him carry that cross. "But I'm strong enough to do it by myself!"

Why? Why do you have to carry your cross by yourself? Because if I can't do that, what good am I? If I can't do that what is my worth? Where's my value? That's why I will continue to preach until we understand that our worth and our value does *not* come from what we do but from **who we are**.

Who are you if not a child of God? And who are you, if not created in the image and likeness of God? So embrace that love, and share it. Especially when you don't feel like it. Because you're going to have days that are just bad days. But those are the days that God's calling us the most to rely on Him. That even if I'm having a bad day, how can I make someone's day better? Instead of a worse day? How can I unite instead of divide? How do we come together as the Body of Christ instead of chipping away at those parts we don't like? When we figure that out, then we are truly loving our neighbor as ourselves. When we figure that out, then we are truly embracing the goal that God has for each and every one of us. When we figure that out, we can truly repeat the words of Elijah when he says, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening. You (not me!), you have the words of eternal life."