

## Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

On December 7, 1941 there was an event that severely shook the people of this country. Pearl Harbor in Hawaii was attacked. Many Americans may have been complacent about the war in Europe and Asia. They may have thought that we were well insulated and safe here. After all, the war was over there. It was far from home. However, the attack on Pearl Harbor was a wakeup call.

How did many Americans respond? Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, enlisted in the military. They responded to the call – the call to defend freedom. They answered the call without hesitation. They saw the need, and that the need was urgent. And they responded wholeheartedly.

This was the same attitude that Jesus had that we heard in our Gospel reading today (Lk 9:51-62). At this point of the Gospel Jesus had accomplished much of His mission. Now He was wholeheartedly determined to go to Jerusalem and complete His mission (v. 51). Nothing was going to get in His way. Not even a Samaritan town that was on the way in which the habitants of that town did not want Jesus to visit them. Jesus and His disciples just journeyed to another village.

This is the attitude that is portrayed for discipleship. The call to discipleship is urgent, and the need is great. The disciple is asked to respond immediately and wholeheartedly. There should be nothing that gets in the way of following the Lord faithfully.

We see an example of this in the first reading (1 Kings 19:16, 19-21). Elisha was plowing the field when Elijah came up to him and placed his mantle over the shoulders of Elisha. Placing his mantle over Elisha showed that Elisha had been chosen as the successor to Elijah. It signified that Elijah was passing on his authority to Elisha. How did Elisha respond to this call? He didn't say, "Please let me finish plowing this field before I follow you." No, his response was immediate and wholehearted. Elisha slaughtered his oxen and used the plowing equipment as fuel to cook the meat. Elisha did this to show that he was leaving everything behind and starting a new life by following Elijah. Elisha knew in his heart that God had called him, and he was going to be resolute in answering the call.

There may be obstacles on the path of discipleship though. Just as that Samaritan town was an obstacle on the path of Jesus toward Jerusalem. When we are faced with obstacles we need to bypass them as best as we can, so that we don't get stopped in our tracks. One of the obstacles we may face is our own attitude. We may make excuses not to answer the call similar to the ones that we heard in the Gospel reading. "I'm too busy Lord. I have too many things to do right now. I will follow you later when I have the time." Or we might say, "I'm too scared to say "yes". What if following the Lord entails giving up too much?" Or we might say, "This is not the path that I intended for myself. I have my own plans for my future." This is what I did when I first felt that God was calling to the priesthood. I said "no" at first. I had my own plans for my future, and they didn't include being a priest. However, God was patient and persistent. After a while, God convinced me that this is the path that I should follow. Anybody can be good at coming up with a variety of excuses to avoid God's call.

Imagine what would have happened if the men and women had made excuses not to defend the country and fight for freedom after the attack on Pearl Harbor. How would the course of World War II have changed if this had happened? It's almost unthinkable, isn't it? Yet, there were many men and women who wholeheartedly embraced the call, even to the point of giving their lives to meet the need. We are grateful, and thank the Lord that they did respond wholeheartedly. Imagine, what if Jesus did not embrace His mission wholeheartedly? What if Jesus had made excuses not to go to Jerusalem because He knew about the suffering that He would have to endure? Thank you Jesus for being resolutely determined to complete your mission. Because He did, we were saved.

In this earthly spiritual battle, on this journey of faith, we are called to be disciples of Christ. Like the men and women in 1941 who answered the call to serve, and through their commitment, helped to make a positive difference in the world. We are also called to make a commitment to Christ, to respond generously and wholeheartedly, and to help make a positive difference in the world. As we heard in the responsorial psalm, “I set the Lord ever before me, with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed. Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices. . . . You will show me the path to life, the fullness of joy in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever.” (Ps 16)