

## Weekend Readings & Reflections

### June 25-26, 2022: Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Readings:** [1 Kings 19:16–21](#), [Psalm 16:1–2, 5, 7–11](#), [Galatians 5:1, 13–18](#), [Luke 9:51–62](#)

*In this week's First Reading, Elijah's disciple is allowed to kiss his parents goodbye before setting out to follow the prophet's call. But we are called to follow a "greater than Elijah", this week's Liturgy wants us to know. In Baptism, we have put on the cloak of Christ, been called to the house of a new Father, and been given a new family in the kingdom of God. We have been called to leave behind our past lives and never look back—to follow wherever He leads. Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind and his disciple was given a double portion of his spirit (see [2 Kings 2:9–15](#)). Jesus too, the Gospel reminds us, was "taken up" (see [Acts 1:2, 11, 22](#)), and He gave us His Spirit to live by, to guide us in our journey in His kingdom. As this week's Epistle tells us, the call of Jesus shatters the yoke of every servitude, sets us free from the rituals of the old Law, and shows us the Law's fulfillment in the following of Jesus, in serving one another through love. His call sets our hands to a new plow, a new task—to be His messengers, sent ahead to prepare all peoples to meet Him and enter into His Kingdom. Elijah called down fire to consume those who wouldn't accept God (see [2 Kings 1:1–16](#)). But we have a different Spirit with us. To live by His Spirit is to face opposition and rejection, as the Apostles do in this week's Gospel. It is to feel like an exile, with no lasting city (see [Hebrews 13:14](#)), no place in this world to lay our head or call home. But we hear the voice of the One we follow in this week's Psalm (see [Acts 2:25–32; 13:35–37](#)). He calls us to make His faith our own—to abide in confidence that He will not abandon us, that He will show us "the path to life," leading us to the fullness of joy in His presence forever.*

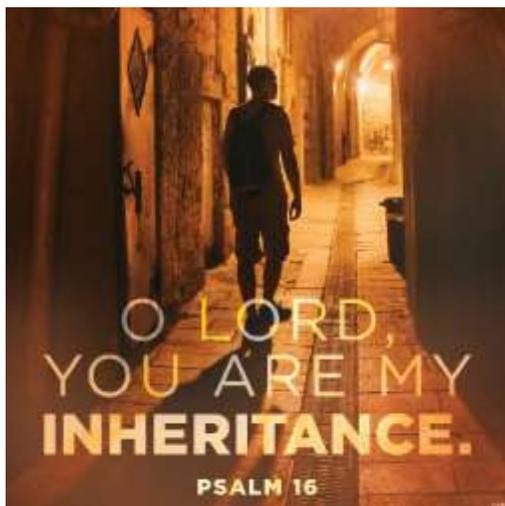
### OPENING PRAYER

**Leader:** Welcome to our discussion for the Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. As we meditate on Jesus' journey to Jerusalem this week, as well as our own faith journeys, let's open our time together by praying one of the Church's traditional prayers for a traveler:

**All:** Lord Jesus Christ my God, be my companion, guide, and protector during my journey. Keep me from all danger, misfortune, and temptation. By your divine power grant me a peaceful and successful journey and safe arrival. In you I place my hope and trust and you I praise, honor, and glorify, together with your Father and Holy Spirit now and forever and ever. Amen.

**Leader:** Today's Gospel reading is about Jesus and the apostles going on a journey. When was the last time you went on a big trip? What are some of the things that you do to get ready for a major trip? Jesus and his disciples are setting their compasses toward the holy city of Jerusalem, where—as they will soon find—Jesus will experience his Passion and Resurrection. Reflect on the above questions as we watch the following video.

Play the video on [FORMED.org](https://www.formed.org): [Opening the Word – 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time \(Year C\)](#)



#### Digging Deeper - Entrusting all to God

*"There are times when the burden of need and our own limitations might tempt us to become discouraged. But precisely then we are helped by the knowledge that, in the end, we are only instruments in the Lord's hands; and this knowledge frees us from the presumption of thinking that we alone are personally responsible for building a better world. In all humility we will do what we can, and in all humility we will entrust the rest to the Lord. It is God who governs the world, not we. We offer him our service only to the extent that we can, and for as long as he grants us the strength. To do all we can with what strength we have, however, is the task which keeps the good servant of Jesus Christ always at work: 'The love of Christ urges us on' (2 Corinthians 5:14)."- Pope Benedict XVI*

## FIRST READING ~ 1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21 ~

The LORD said to Elijah: “You shall anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah, as prophet to succeed you.” Elijah set out and came upon Elisha, son of Shaphat, as he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen; he was following the twelfth. Elijah went over to him and threw his cloak over him. Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, “Please, let me kiss my father and mother goodbye, and I will follow you.” Elijah answered, “Go back! Have I done anything to you?” Elisha left him, and taking the yoke of oxen, slaughtered them; he used the plowing equipment for fuel to boil their flesh, and gave it to his people to eat. Then Elisha left and followed Elijah as his attendant.

*Elijah is one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. But even he gets tired. God tells him to find his successor to continue the prophet’s work.*

- *In your ministry and service of God are you ‘finding a successor’ to share the load and replace you? Why do you think this is important? Have a conversation with God about this.*

*Elijah is very wealthy. Most families would own only 1 oxen. He kills the 12 oxen and uses the farming tools to create a fire. He destroys everything so as to not be attracted back to his old life. He makes a decision that God’s work has primacy of place and is the first calling upon his life.*

- *Imagine living these actions within your own life and circumstances. What attracts you? In what areas of your life are you not ‘free’?*

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## SECOND READING ~ Galatians 5:1, 13-18 ~

Brothers and sisters: For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. For you were called for freedom, brothers and sisters. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another. I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

*St Paul continues to teach the Galatian community about the true nature of freedom. Freedom is really being ‘free for others’. To not be attached or enslaved to material possessions and self indulging desires (flesh) requires discipline and effort.*

- *In what area of your life could you make a daily prayer this week for God to help you? Is there an action you could do to enter this particular journey of ‘freedom’ this week?*

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## GOSPEL ~ Luke 9:51-62 ~

When the days for Jesus’ being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, and he sent messengers ahead of him. On the way they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?” Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they journeyed to another village. As they were proceeding on their journey someone said to him, “I will

follow you wherever you go.” Jesus answered him, “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.” And to another he said, “Follow me.” But he replied, “Lord, let me go first and bury my father.” But he answered him, “Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” And another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home.” To him Jesus said, “No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God.”

*From Luke 9,51 we meet a tougher Jesus. Some texts have Jesus 'set his face like flint' toward Jerusalem. He is determined and makes large demands of his disciples. Going to Jerusalem represents Jesus' obedience to God to do 'his will'.*

- *Is there anything you have heard God ask you to do? What will it involve for you to 'set your face' resolutely toward doing it?*

*Care for and burial of one's parents was a top social and cultural priority for Jewish people. Allegiance to parents and duties as a child is replaced by Jesus with 'proclaiming the kingdom of God'.*

- *What pressures or expectations does society or your family place upon you? Do these 'limit' your freedom to respond to God by living the values and lifestyle of Jesus? How? What will you now do? Jesus takes disciples on a special journey toward Jerusalem from this point in the Gospel. There is no turning back. The joy and success of ministry in Galilee changes to resistance by religious people and civil authorities. Jesus urgently teaches his disciples about mission and the Kingdom of God.*
- *Imagine a fire is burning and many people's lives are in danger. Would you let go of your 'work' to 'save' these people? Such is the call of the Kingdom of God. How will you respond?*



## MEDITATION

The Jews and Samaritans had been divided for centuries. Jewish pilgrims who passed through Samaritan territory were often treated badly and even assaulted. Jesus did the unthinkable for a Jew. He not only decided to travel through Samaritan territory at personal risk, but he also asked for hospitality in one of their villages! Jesus' offer of friendship was rebuffed. Is there any wonder that the disciples were indignant and felt justified in wanting to see retribution done to this village? Wouldn't you respond the same way? Jesus, however, rebukes his disciples for their lack of toleration. Jesus had "set his face toward Jerusalem" to die on a cross that Jew, Samaritan, and Gentile might be reconciled with God and be united as one people in Christ.

Tolerance is a much needed virtue today. But aren't we often tolerant for the wrong thing or for the wrong motive? Christian love seeks the highest good of both one's neighbor and one's enemy. When Abraham Lincoln was criticized for his courtesy and tolerance towards his enemies during the American Civil War, he responded: "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?"

With the call the Lord gives the grace to respond and the strength to follow all the way to the end. Why does Jesus issue a challenge with the call? Jesus was utterly honest in telling people what it would cost to follow him. When a would-be disciple approached Jesus and said he was ready to follow, Jesus told him it would require sacrifice - the sacrifice of certain creaturely comforts. Jesus appealed to this man's heart and told him to detach himself from whatever might hold him back. Spiritual detachment is a

necessary step for following the Lord. It frees us to give ourselves without reserve to the Lord and his service. While many of us may not need to give up the comfort of our own home and bed to follow Jesus, we, nonetheless, must be willing to part with anything that might stand in the way of doing God's will.

Another would-be disciple said he would follow as soon as he had buried his father. What he meant by this expression was that he felt the need to return to his home to take care of his father through old age until he died. The third had no obligation to return home, but simply wanted to go back and say good-bye. Jesus surprised these would-be disciples with the stark truth that nothing should hinder us from following the Lord. Was Jesus being harsh and rude to his would-be followers? Not really. We are free to decide whether we will take the path which Jesus offers. But if we choose to go, then the Lord wants us to count the cost and choose for it freely.

What does the story of a plowman have to do with the journey? A plowman who looked back while plowing his field caused the line or furrow he cut into the soil to become crooked. One crooked line easily leads to another until the whole field is a mess. The plowman had to look straight ahead in order to keep the plow from going off course. Likewise, if we look back on what we have freely left behind to follow the Lord - whether that be some distraction, attachment, or sinful habit which leads us away from doing God's will - our path will likely diverge and we'll miss what God has for us.

The Gospel does not record the response from these three would-be disciples. We are only left with the question which Jesus intends for us as well. Are you ready to take the path which the Lord Jesus offers? His grace is sufficient and his love is strong. There is nothing greater we can do with our lives than to place them at the service of the Lord and Master of the universe. We cannot outmatch God in his generosity. Jesus promises that those who are willing to part with what is most dear to them for his sake "will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29). The Lord Jesus offers us a kingdom of lasting peace, unending joy, surpassing love, enduring friendship, and abundant life.

- *Are you ready to follow the Lord Jesus wherever he may lead you?*
- *How do you treat those who cross you and cause you trouble? Do you seek their good rather than their harm?*
- *Is there anything holding you back from pursuing the Lord and his will for you life?*

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** In closing let us now pray together a prayer from St. Ignatius of Loyola:

**ALL:** Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess you have given me. I surrender it all to you to be disposed of according to your will. Give me only your love and your grace - with these I will be rich enough and will desire nothing more. Amen.

**Leader:** (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

[Discussion questions created by Fr Frank Bird sm, Marist Priest, and distributed by [www.maristlaitynz.org](http://www.maristlaitynz.org), were shared with permission from [www.livingtheword.org.nz](http://www.livingtheword.org.nz).]

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