Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Gospel text (*Lk* 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."

"Follow me"

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Today, the Gospel invites us to ponder over our following Christ. It matters that we follow him as He expects us to. James and John had not yet learned his message of love and forgiveness: "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" (Lk 9:54). There were others also called by the Lord, but they were not yet ready to completely part with their family bonds. To follow Christ and accomplish our mission, we must do it free from any tie: "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God." (Lk 9:62).

At a World Missionary Journey, Saint John Paul II made an appeal to all Catholics to become missionaries of the Gospel of Christ through dialogue and forgiveness. The motto was: "The mission is an

announcement of forgiveness.” He said that only our love for God can unite men of every race and culture, by erasing the painful divisions, the ideological contrasts, the economic inequalities, and the violent abuse humans are still subjected to. Through evangelization, we believers may help others to recognize one another as brothers and sisters.

If we are to truly feel like brethren, we must start by understanding each other and debating always with respect. His Holiness emphasized that our determination for an attentive and respectful dialogue is a necessary condition for the true testimony of God's saving love, because he who forgives is already opening his heart to others and is able to feel love. In the Last Supper the Lord said it too: “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you… This is how all will know that you are my disciples” (Jn 13:34-35).

To evangelize is a task for all of us, although in different ways. For some of us, it means going to countries where Christ is still unknown. Others may be called to evangelize at home. Let us ask ourselves whether those around us know how to live the fundamental truths of our faith; and whether we are already doing something to remedy this situation. We all can and must support the missionary tasks with our prayer, sacrifice and behavior, in addition to the testimony of our forgiveness and understanding towards all people.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “If he were not true God, he would not be able to bring us healing, if he were not true man, he would not be able to give us an example.” (Saint Leo the Great)

- “The whole history of the Church, with all the problems, also shows that good soil exists, that the good seed exists and bears fruit.” (Benedict XVI)

- “(…) [Jesus Christ] was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there. Three times he had announced his Passion and Resurrection; now, heading toward Jerusalem, Jesus says: ‘It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.’ (Lk 13:33)” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 557)