

## THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (YEAR A)

June 28, 2020

Father Anthony Marques

2 Kings 4:8–11, 14–16a • Romans 6:3–4, 8–11 • Matthew 10:37–42

### I.

COVID-19 has delayed things,  
but the next two weeks are full of sacraments.

On Thursday, ten young people in parish received Confirmation.

This evening,  
fourteen people will receive all or some of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation:  
Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

In two weeks,  
the diocese will have two new priests and one transitional deacon.

And yesterday evening, Liam, one of our younger parishioners,  
made his First Holy Communion.

These celebrations—  
these profound and life-changing encounters with Jesus Christ—  
are signs of hope that the Church continues its God-given mission,  
to proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.

These sacraments change us so that we can change the world,  
as we strive to conform all relationships, institutions, and transactions  
more closely to God's plan.

### II.

We see in the Gospel that total dedication to Christ  
enables us to perfectly represent him in the world.

First, the dedication of discipleship:

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,  
and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

and whoever does not take up his cross  
and follow after me is not worthy of me.  
Whoever finds his life will lose it,  
and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

The very next verse tells us the purpose of such committed discipleship:

“Whoever receives you receives me,  
and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

There are many examples of dedicated people who represent whole institutions by virtue of their dedication: athletes, healthcare workers, soldiers.

Christians have the privilege and responsibility of representing Jesus Christ by virtue of their baptism.

According to St. Paul in the Second Reading,

“Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus  
were baptized into his death?  
We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death,  
so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead  
by the glory of the Father,  
we too might live in newness of life.”

Baptism makes us like Christ because we are plunged—  
this is the meaning of the term “baptize”—  
into his death and resurrection.

God sees the image of his Son in each baptized person.

That image becomes blurred because of sin,  
but the sacraments are there to restore its luster,  
especially the Sacrament of Penance and Holy Communion.

The statistics about the current practice of the Catholic faith in the United States,  
as in other Western countries, are gloomy.

Even before COVID,  
only 23 percent of Catholics attend Mass once a week.

Of those who attend weekly Mass,  
only 61 percent confess their sins at least once a year.

Among those who don't attend Mass each week,  
the percentage who make use of the Sacrament of Penance is even lower.

There are many reasons why Catholics and other Christians  
are not practicing their faith the way they used to.

And there are no silver bullets or panaceas to remedy the situation.

The way forward is for each Catholic to realize that he or she is called to be a  
dedicated disciple of Christ and therefore a perfect representative of him.

This is the meaning of Baptism, the sacrament that initiates Christian life.

The Christian vocation is to be a vessel or channel of God's grace in the world.

How to go about becoming a dedicated disciple of Christ,  
and an effective ambassador of his Gospel?

The answer lies in relationships:  
relationship with Christ and relationships with others.

The First Reading is instructive in that regard.

The prophet Elisha comes to know a certain woman  
during of the course of his travels to Shunem, a town in the Jezreel Valley of Israel  
(not far from Nazareth).

This woman invites Elisha to a meal, and then she tells her husband:

“I know that Elisha is a holy man of God.  
Since he visits us often, let us arrange a little room on the roof  
and furnish it for him with a bed, table, chair, and lamp,  
so that when he comes to us he can stay there.”

As the friendship develops, Elisha wishes to reciprocate this generosity:

“Can something be done for her?”

This is the kind of meaningful relationship that God would like to have with us.

As that relationship develops, we deepen our commitment to him,  
and we are able to step out more confidently into the world as his ambassador.

The Christian call to proclaim the Good News is designated as “evangelization.”

To evangelize is not to proselytize, meaning, to forcibly convert someone.

Evangelization proposes the Gospel; it does not impose it.

That proposal is made with conviction that the death and resurrection of Christ,  
for the forgiveness of sins, is not just for us,  
but is the meaning of each person’s life.

Evangelization is the responsibility of every Catholic.

And it is most effective when it is carried out one-on-one,  
within the context of a relationship with another person.

There is no pressure to “close the sale.”

There is only joy, generosity, and freedom in pointing out the way to God  
by pointing to what he has done for us,  
why we believe in him.

“If, then, we have died with Christ,  
we believe that we shall also live with him. ...  
You too must think of yourselves as dead to sin  
and living for God in Christ Jesus.”

God has drawn us to himself through Baptism and the other sacraments,  
so that we relate to him as his sons and daughters.

We are heralds of this Gospel by all that we think, say, and do.

This is how to bring others to Christ.

This is how we can change the world.