

13th Sunday per Annum - C
I Kings 19:16b, 19-21;
Galatians 5:1, 13-18;
Luke 9:51-62
Little Flower - 6/26/16

My Brothers and Sisters,

The next two Sundays I will be on vacation. Every year the Archdiocese assigns two missionaries to each parish. Next Sunday there will be missionary priest making an appeal for the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi. The following Sunday Fr. Patrick Cooney, who lives with me, will be the celebrant at all the Masses except 10:30. Fr. Joe Moriarty, a son of the parish and the new rector of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary, will celebrate the 10:30 a.m. Mass.

As most of you know, I was at our biennial priest convocation this past week. Because I came home to two funerals, this homily will be brief. The priest convocation focused on mission. The readings for today and the next two Sundays also focus on mission.

Today's Gospel focuses on the urgency of Jesus' mission and, therefore, the urgency of our mission as Christians. Jesus told the man who promised to follow him wherever he went that he, Jesus, did not have a home, indicating that he was mission driven and a missionary. This was evident in various places in the Gospels. When people from one city would want Jesus to remain with them, he refused because he said he had to proclaim the Gospel in other towns and villages. Likewise, Jesus told the man who wanted to bury his father to let the dead bury their dead, "*but you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.*" He told the third person not even to take time to say goodbye to family. Jesus was not disrespecting the dead or family. He simply wanted his followers, including us, to have a sense of urgency when it comes to mission.

How might this apply to us as a parish? It seems to me that it suggests that we must not allow ourselves as a parish to become complacent. It is very easy for us to become comfortable doing what we have always done. It is very easy for us to simply continue to serve those who are registered in the parish or who come to us. However, in the Great Commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel, all of us are charged to evangelize: "*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*" [28:19-20].

Today's reading from Paul's Letter to the Galatians challenges us to reflect on the meaning of freedom. What is the freedom about which Paul was writing? Paul tells us that the freedom Christ brings is freedom from sin, freedom for service, and freedom to love.

Paul wrote, "*For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.*" The yoke of slavery is sin. In John's Gospel, Jesus said, "*Amen, amen, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin*" [8:34]. In high school freshman religion, Fr. Frank Bryan, wrote two words on the blackboard: virtue and vice. He defined virtues as good habits and vices as bad habits. If we want to be free, we have to strive to avoid sin, we have to strive to break any bad habits we have, and we have to strive to overcome any addictions we have. As you know, we can become addicted to almost anything.

My brothers and sisters, I would invite you to reflect on two questions this week. In what ways do you think we as a parish are complacent? Personally, what sins, vices, or addictions do I need to be free from in order to be free to serve and free to love?