

## 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

### 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a

*This is part of a collection of miracle stories about Elisha, one of the greatest Prophets and wonderworkers in the history of Israel. He was called by Elijah, whom he served, until that great one was taken up into heaven. Elisha asked for and received his mantle and a double portion of his prophetic spirit. He died around 858 B.C.*

**8**One day Elisha came to Shunem, This was probably a town southwest of the Sea of Galilee. As a prophet, Elisha traveled about the country speaking for God, warning and comforting the people about the consequences of their choices. **where there was a woman of influence, who urged him to dine with her. Afterward, whenever he passed by, he used to stop there to dine.** Hospitality was an essential virtue in biblical times. Travelers were often dependent on the hospitality of strangers not only for food and comfort, but also for safety at night.

**9**so she said to her husband, “I know that Elisha is a holy man of God. The prophet is considered holy, not because of personal piety, but because he speaks the word of God. The Catechism tells us that the presence of Christ in our ordained ministry is not to be understood as if the latter were preserved from all human weaknesses, error, even sin.

However, the power of the Holy Spirit GUARANTEES the sacraments so that even the sin of the minister cannot impede the fruit of grace.<sup>3</sup> **Since he visits us often,**

**10**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.” Hospitality is one of the marks of the believing Church and works of charity are one of the things on which we will be judged.

Matthew 25 tells us of the final judgment when Jesus, escorted by all the angels of heaven, will sit upon his royal throne with all the nations assembled before him. Then he will separate them into two groups. To those on his right he will say, “Come. You have my Father’s blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” 1 Peter 4:9 tells us further to “Be mutually hospitable WITHOUT COMPLAINING!”

**11**Sometime later Elisha arrived and stayed in the room overnight.

**14**Later Elisha asked, “Can something be done for her?” His servant Gehazi answered, “Yes! She has no son, and her husband is getting on in years.” She bore the shame of barrenness, which was a difficult burden in that society.

**15**Elisha said, “Call her.” When the woman had been called and stood at the door, Elisha’s indirect conversation through Gehazi shows the delicacy of both the Prophet and his host, because it was not customary for a lady to visit a man in his private room. The woman had been called by his servant in her own home, and yet she did not enter his room.

**16**Elisha promised, “This time next year you will be fondling a baby son.” She did give birth to a son who later died and was brought back to life through the efforts of Elisha.

This story is told to illustrate the words of Jesus in the Gospel about welcoming a prophet and receiving a prophet's reward. The Jews always felt that to receive a person's messenger was the same as to receive the person himself.

## **Romans 6:3-4, 8-11**

Brothers and sisters:

**3**Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? St. Paul thinks of baptism throughout as administered by immersion. By immersion in the baptismal water the candidate for baptism was symbolically drowned and buried: his coming forth from the water was symbolical of resurrection. Baptism thus symbolized the death and resurrection of Christ, and produced in the baptized the effects of that death and resurrection.<sup>5</sup> At this time a new birth takes place and that presupposes a symbolic death. When we receive the sacrament we die; that is to say, our blameworthiness (being at fault) is destroyed. We renounce sin once and for all, and are born again into a new life.<sup>2</sup> Baptism then implies death—death to sin, the death of the “old man.”<sup>5</sup>

**4**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 joins us to Christ crucified and risen, so that united with his death, our sins are put to death, and united with his rising, our souls are filled with life. In the liturgy of Baptism, the person is submerged in water as a body is buried in a grave, only to rise again to a new life with God.<sup>1</sup> The newly baptized are freed from the old rule of sin.<sup>5</sup> In a sense, Baptism does to the soul what birth does to the body: we begin our spiritual life!

**8**If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Christ liberated us from sin and opened a new life for us as sons of God.

**9**We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. Because Christ destroyed death by his own death, his risen humanity is forever victorious over death.<sup>1</sup>

**10**As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; The death of Jesus was an unique event, never to be repeated, for through it he entered the definitive sphere of his glory.<sup>4</sup> as to his life, he lives for God.

**11**Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus. Pope John Paul II often admonished people to LIVE OUT YOUR BAPTISM! In Baptism we are cleansed of ALL sin. To stay dead to sin AFTER Baptism, personal effort is called for! The grace of Baptism delivers no one from all the weakness of nature. Satan is constantly marketing the allure of sin through temptation. However, 1John 4:4 tells us that: “He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world!” In the final analysis, this is our choice: we either change the world or the world changes us.

## **Matthew 10:37-42**

*This is the conclusion of the Missionary discourse. Nothing is said in the gospel about the outcome of this sending forth, possibly because the mission continues and these words can be applied to all of us who*

*continue the task. Between last week's reading and this one, there are two verses: "Do not suppose that my mission on earth is to spread peace. My mission is to spread not peace, but division. I have come to set a man at odds with his father; a daughter with her mother; a daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law; in short, to make a man's enemies those of his own household."*

Jesus said to his apostles:

**37**Whoever loves father or mother more than me While we should love and respect the parents God has given us, that should not come before love of God. There is a matter of priorities.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that the Rabbis insisted that one follow God rather than one's parents.<sup>9</sup> The first vocation of the Christian is to follow Jesus. **is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;** As Fulton J. Sheen puts it, "The Gospel would stir up strife between those who would accept Him and those who would reject Him. The unconverted mother would hate her converted daughter, and the unconverted father would hate the converted son, so that a man's bitterest foes would be those of his own household. But they were not to think that all this was a loss. There is a double life, the physical and the spiritual."<sup>7</sup> We should also consider the Catechism that points out that becoming a disciple of Jesus means accepting the invitation to belong to God's family, to live in conformity with his way of life: "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother."

**38**and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. The Christian life is not just a matter of bringing Jesus into my life; it is also a matter of Jesus opening the doors into HIS LIFE. I don't just make room in me for him, he invites me to renounce my activity in order to be incorporated into his mission, his destiny, his life.<sup>10</sup> Following Christ, doing what he asks, means gambling this present life to gain eternal life!<sup>16</sup> Jesus here assures us that faithfulness will entail self-denial, suffering, and possibly death. Before his Passion, the cross symbolized shame and rejection, afterward it symbolized the glory of Christian martyrdom. The Catechism tells us that when the disciples took up their cross and followed Christ, they acquired a new outlook on illness and the sick. Jesus associated them with his own life of poverty and service. He made them share in his ministry of compassion and healing.<sup>3</sup>

**39**Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Tertullian noted that "When the Romans put the early Christians to death, the pagan appeal always was: 'Save your life; do not throw your life away.' But as Jesus would lay down his life and take it up again, so too, what they would lose biologically, they would save spiritually. What was sacrificed to him was never lost. Here Jesus is summarizing his Cross and Resurrection: 'By gaining his life (biologically) a man will lose it (spiritually); by losing his life (biologically) for my sake, he will gain it (spiritually).'"<sup>7</sup> While martyrdom is an issue here, the saying probably had a broader application to self-denial and wholehearted acceptance of the demands of being a disciple.<sup>9</sup>

**40**Whoever receives you (apostles) receives me, (Jesus) and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me (the Father). It was a Rabbinic Principal that the representative of a person is like the person himself. Here the Father sends the Son who sends the apostles. If

Christ himself were seen walking the earth, there is little chance any one of us would treat him any differently than we do those among us who are saying and doing what Christ taught and who nevertheless do not correspond in appearance to our own mental image of what Christ OUGHT to look like.<sup>10</sup> Paul reserved great praise for the Galatians when he wrote to them, “You welcomed me...as you might have welcomed Christ himself.”

<sup>41</sup>Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward. The very fact of generously receiving God’s friends will gain one the reward that they obtain.<sup>6</sup> Here again we see the sword of division that divides mankind into the rejectors and the welcomers of the Gospel and the disciples who bring it.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>42</sup>And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones The “little ones” are the apostles. They must rely on the hospitality of others for daily necessities during their mission. Service rendered to them is service to Jesus himself.<sup>8</sup> to drink because the little one is a disciple—amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.”

*Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) “Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans,” With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (2) “The Navarre Bible: Romans And Galatians,” (3) “Catechism of the Catholic Church,” (4) “The Jerome Biblical Commentary,” (5) “The Sunday Epistles And Gospels” by Monsignor Patrick Boylan, (6) “The Navarre Bible: St. Matthew,” (7) “Life Of Christ” by Fulton J. Sheen, (8) “Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew,” With Introduction, commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (9) “The Gospel of Matthew” by Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., and (10) “Fire Of Mercy, Heart Of The Word,” by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis.*

*In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.*