

Thirteenth Sunday of the Year A

Matthew 10:37-42

37 Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows: 'Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who prefers son or daughter to me is not worthy of me. 38 Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me. 39 Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.

40 Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and those who welcome me welcome the one who sent me.

41 Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will have a prophet's reward; and anyone who welcomes a holy man because he is a holy man will have a holy man's reward.

42 If anyone gives so much a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward.'

Other readings: 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16 Psalm 88 (89) Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

These are the concluding words of the Missionary Discourse of Jesus, the second of his major speeches in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus challenges the disciples, and us too, to put no other person before our faith in him. For Christians there are new family ties, which, though not undermining our love of those dear to us, give us a broader perspective and a considerable challenge.

The cross is mentioned for the first time in Matthew's gospel, not the cross of Jesus, but the difficult burden that each one must bear in imitation of him. We are called to give our lives as Christ himself will give his life.

But the embrace of missionary discipleship offers us new joys. Those who offer a welcome to the disciples of Christ forge a relationship with Jesus, and with 'the one who sent him'. Friendships are transformed and offer us a wider and everlasting scope. How we treat others in this life, particularly the 'little ones', will bring us close to Jesus and to the one who sent him.

The first reading tells us how the prophet Elisha, centuries before Christ, received generous hospitality from a woman of Shunem. Her kindness is rewarded in an extraordinary way.

Do I place my faith in Jesus first in my life and relationships?

Am I willing to embrace my cross, whatever form it may take?

We pray for those who make great sacrifices in their service of the gospel.

We pray for generosity to the little ones of God.