

Homily – Luke 9: 51-62

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time – 25th / 26th June, 2022

In 1904, William Borden, heir to the Borden Dairy estate, graduated from a Chicago high school as a millionaire. His parents gave him a trip around the world. Traveling through Asia and the Middle East, Borden felt he was given a special call, a mission by God for the world's suffering people. Writing home, he said, "I'm going to give my life to prepare for the mission field." When he made that decision, he wrote in the back of his Bible two words: "No reserves." After graduating from Yale, he turned down numerous high-paying jobs and headed to the seminary. At that time, he entered two more words in his Bible: "No retreats." After completing studies at Princeton Seminary, Borden then sailed for China. On the way he stopped in Egypt for some additional training. While there, he was stricken with cerebral meningitis and died within a month. Perhaps we might think what a waste his entire life was! But, William Borden didn't think so. Shortly before he died, he entered two more words in his Bible. And the statement read: "No reserves, no retreats, no regrets." — Well, success for a Christian is to be able to say at the end of the line, "I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; and I have kept the Faith."

Now, today's readings are about God's call and human being's commitment in answer to that call. The first reading describes how Elisha committed himself wholeheartedly, responding to the call of God to be a prophet, despite his initial hesitation when God called him through prophet Elijah.

And coming to the second part of today's Gospel, Luke introduces three potential disciples who offered a variety of reasons that made Jesus' call to ministry "impossible" for them to accept. They were found unfit and unprepared to follow Jesus as His disciples. And today, Jesus is asking us to follow Him, totally and immediately, without any reservations, both by giving priority to Him and to His cause and by surrendering our lives to God in humble and dedicated service to others. Jesus is firm when he says: "once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God". William Borden about whom we spoke at the beginning never looked back once he decided to follow Jesus. And he was able to say: "No reserves, no retreats, no regrets."

In 1982 the same year the film *Chariots of Fire* won the Academy Award, an article appeared in the Reader's Digest. It was about a Catholic advertising executive. In spite of her successful career, she felt an emptiness in her

life. One morning, during a breakfast meeting with her marketing consultant, she mentioned that emptiness. “Do you want to fill it?” her colleague asked. “Of course, I do,” she said. He looked at her and replied, “Then start each day with an hour of prayer.” She looked at him and said, “Don, you’ve got to be kidding. If I tried that, I’d go off my rocker.” Her friend smiled and said, “That’s exactly what I said 20 years ago.” Then he said something else that really made her think. He said, “You’re trying to fit God into your life. Instead, you should be trying to fit your life around God.” The woman left the restaurant in turmoil. Begin each morning with prayer? Begin each morning with an hour of prayer? Absolutely out of the question! Yet, the next morning the woman found herself doing exactly that. And she’s been doing it ever since. And she admits that it has not always been easy. There have been mornings when she was filled with great peace and joy. But there have been other mornings when she was filled with nothing but weariness. And it was on these weary mornings that she remembered something else that her marketing consultant said: “There will be times when your mind just won’t go into God’s sanctuary. That’s when you spend your hour in God’s waiting room. Still, you’re there, and God appreciates your struggle to stay there. What’s important is the commitment.”

Well, we can't listen to stories like these and still not feel the call of an inner voice to do something similar in our own lives. If we're having trouble keeping our eyes focused on Jesus, if we're experiencing an emptiness in our life, maybe we should seriously consider making some daily commitment to Jesus.

What should that commitment be? No one else can answer that question for us. We must answer it ourselves.

Well, we are all here this evening because, in one way or another, we have said to Jesus, "I will follow you." But the truth of the matter could be, that most of us don't want to follow Jesus because we want Him to follow us. If so, we are only partially faithful to Him. But the Good News is that we are following him as best we can. We will leave this hour of Eucharistic worship and return to our families, our society with all sorts of tough choices and difficult demands. And here, we need to pray for strength, we need to ask for forgiveness when we fail, and we need to renew our determination to walk with Jesus by being loyal to our spouse and family, earning our living honestly, and living not only peacefully, but lovingly, with our neighbours. Let us ask the Lord to give us the grace to live a life worthy of our calling as Christians, as followers of the Lord. God bless you all, **Amen.**

