

Homily of Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A, 2023

2 Kings 4:4-11,14-16; Psalm 89:2-19; Romans 6:3-4, 8-11; Gospel 10:37-42

The first reading is from 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16. However, verses 12-13 have an important message. It reads, “He [Elisha] told his servant Gehazi to go and call the woman. When she came, he said to Gehazi, ‘Ask her what I can do for her in return for all the trouble she has had in providing for our needs. Maybe she would like me to go to the king or army commander and put in a good word for her.’ ‘I have all I need here among my own people,’ she answered.” The woman and her husband provided for Elisha and his servant. They did this out of their generosity and goodwill and did not expect anything in return. We see in the passage that when she was asked what she needed, she said that she needed nothing; “I have all I need here among my own people.” She did not need any favors from the army commander or the king. She did not even ask for prayer for her to conceive and have a child. It was Elisha’s servant who asked for a child on her behalf. God has a way of rewarding people of goodwill!

Jesus tells us in the Gospel, “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. Whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because the little one is a disciple... will surely not lose his reward.”

It is important that we express gratitude to those who pay their tithe to the Church; those who bring various kinds of donations to the Church, to Church missions and establishments for the work of evangelization; those who sponsor the training of seminarians; and those who volunteer for all kinds of mission work and services in the Church and not expecting any material reward in return.

We also pray for governments, churches, organizations, and individuals who, generously, undertake works of mercy and charity to help and support the needy in our society and our world.

May our God who rewarded the Shunamite woman and her husband reward all generous benefactors and benefactresses. Psalm 20:3 prays, “May God remember your every offering, and graciously accept your burnt offering.” In Luke 6:38, Jesus promises, “Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”

The message today challenges our world driven by the selfish and self-interest motivated attitudes of ‘What’s in it for me?’ and ‘string attached mentality.’ It can also be called Judas Mentality. Judas asked the chief priests, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” (Matthew 26:15). Unfortunately, the age-old sins of ‘What’s in it for me?’ and ‘string attached mentality’ pervade all areas of human existence and have brought so much horror and pain to humanity. Almost every human-made calamity, far and near, is caused by the sin of ‘What’s in it for me?’

Jesus says, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” By this statement, Jesus warns us against the life ruled by selfishness, self-interest, self-seeking, self-serving, self-absorption, self-love, self-indulgence, and self-regard.

We are invited to examine our relationships and undertakings, and see where we have offended God and fellow human beings by the sins of ‘What’s in it for me,’ and ‘string attached mentality,’ and repent. We have a lot to learn from the Shunamite woman and her husband, who provided for Elisha and his servant without expecting anything in return.

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP