

HOMILY for 13th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – YEAR A

This Sunday's Gospel & 1st Reading invite us to pick up our daily Cross & continue to show God's love to the world. As I reflect upon that message, I recall this cute story I'd like to share with you.

Little Billy was left to fix lunch. When his mother returned with a friend, she noticed that Billy had already strained the tea. "Did you find the tea strainer, sweetie?" his mother asked.

"No, mother, I couldn't; so I used the fly swatter," replied Billy.

His mother nearly fainted; so Billy hastily added, "Don't get excited, mother. I used an old one!"

Anyway, if I ask, "Do you love your family?" You would surely say, "Yes, I do." Then, I'd pose another question, "How much do you love them?" You would no doubt answer, "Very much!" When we love someone very much, we would do anything to please that person & maintain that relationship as long as possible. We would honor that love & keep its legacy going by doing what that person would want us to do. If the relationship with our families means that much to us, there's one more relationship for us to consider. Namely, the one with Jesus. Again, if I ask, "Do you love Jesus?" You would certainly say, "Yes, I do." Next, I'd raise another question, "How much do you love him?" You'd undoubtedly say, "A lot!"

Jesus certainly wants us to prove our love for him by real actions. He does not want us to say, "I love Jesus a lot," but do nothing to show our love for him. That's why He says this in today's Gospel, "Whoever loves father or mother, son or daughter, more than me is not worthy of me. He who will not take up his Cross & come after me is not worthy of me." In other words, He wants us to make real sacrifices to show our love for Him. Those sacrifices challenge us to leave behind some important human relationships & embrace closely the one with Jesus. Those sacrifices call us to take up our daily Crosses & follow in Jesus' footsteps without any complaints. If we can manage those sacrifices for the sake of Jesus, then we really show how much we love him. When we truly love someone, we're willing to make all the sacrifices including offering our own lives for that person. When we really love Jesus, we won't hesitate to do anything for Him. The most important thing Jesus asks us to do for Him until His second coming is to love God & love our neighbors. If we can do that, we will prove that we truly love Him.

In case we haven't realized it yet, loving Jesus does have an upside to it. If we love Jesus, we'll be rewarded for it one way or another. Here's what He promises us in today's Gospel, "... Whoever receives a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. Whoever receives a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives just a cup of water to one of the little ones will surely not lose his/her reward." So, Jesus promises us that everything we do will be rewarded accordingly. Even if we give someone a cup of water, that loving act would not go unnoticed & we'll get a suitable reward for it. Perhaps that's why a couple in today's 1st Reading reached out to a stranger & gave him help during his troubled time. They knew that their loving act would save life & get rewarded somehow in the end. Apparently their region faced with a devastating drought that they have not seen for years. There was no rain for days & everything suffered for lack of water. Nothing could grow in that condition & people had a bad harvest. They had to face shortage of food & many died of hunger. Elisha lived during that tough period & traveled through the region of Shunem one day. He came to visit a couple of influence frequently & talked with them about the Lord & the importance of faith. The couple learned that he was a great prophet & wanted to help him out in that trial time. They did not only feed him but also arrange a place in their home for him to stay. Elisha was so grateful for their kindness that he called upon the Lord to bless them with a child. For the couple was advanced in years without a child. Within a year they had a baby son who brought them joy & lots of wonderful promises.

As you can see, kindness begets kindness. An act of love & generosity of an elderly couple was returned with a kind blessing of the Lord. In my childhood, I was taught to do many kind deeds everyday as I could. So, I've searched out many opportunities throughout the day to help out others & be kind & generous to people around me. That teaching has stuck with me so far. The world, on the other hand,

wants us to do the opposite. It wants us to focus only on ourselves & our own benefits. It encourages us to do tit for tat & act mean toward others especially the people who might treat us badly. That's why we have a tit-for-tat, chaotic, & violent world as we see around us now. I often wonder how our world would be like if everyone would try to say one nice thing or do one act of kindness every day, or if our children would be encouraged to show more acts of love & generosity instead of trying to acquire more knowledge of modern technology. One thing I know for sure is that everyone would be kind & generous toward one another instead of being mean & selfish. The attitude of our children & our world would be changed for the better.

My dear brothers & sisters, it might be easy for us to say, "I love Jesus." But, it's much more difficult for us to show it in concrete actions every day. I pray that you will challenge yourself to do one kind deed a day to show your love for our Lord Jesus. By following that daily routine, you'll not only prove your love for Jesus but also help change our world to be a better place. More importantly, our Lord will reward you abundantly in this life & the next.