

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #99

READING I 1 Kings 19:16b, 19-21

A reading from the first Book of Kings

The LORD said to Elijah:

"You shall anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah, as prophet to succeed you."

Elijah set out and came upon Elisha, son of Shaphat, as he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen; he was following the twelfth.

Elijah went over to him and threw his cloak over him.

Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said,

"Please, let me kiss my father and mother goodbye, and I will follow you."

Elijah answered, "Go back!

Have I done anything to you?"

Elisha left him, and taking the yoke of oxen, slaughtered them; he used the plowing equipment for fuel to boil their flesh, and gave it to his people to eat.

Then Elisha left and followed Elijah as his attendant.

God is *not* displeased. The great prophet Elijah, who fought mightily against idolatry, will eventually need a successor; Elisha will become his apprentice until that time. Practice distinguishing "Elijah" (ee-Lĭ-juh) from "Elisha" (ee-Lĭ-shuh).

Shaphat = SHAY-fat
Abel-meholah = AY-b*I-muh-HOH-lah
Emphasize the number of oxen.

A "cloak" represented the personality and authority of its owner.

Elisha is not denied this courtesy.

The import of this line is: "I'm not stopping you."

Elisha is leaving behind all claims to his family wealth.

And, eventually, Elisha became Elijah's successor.

READING I The prophet Elijah is often remembered for his miraculous deeds, his bold confrontation with the prophets of Baal, and his departure in a fiery chariot. Some remarkably ordinary deeds, however, also proved to be important, including his call of Elisha recounted in today's reading. After the Lord commands Elijah to anoint Elisha as prophet to succeed him, Elijah comes upon the young man while he is out plowing with twelve yoke of oxen. Such an ordinary setting for God's call of Israel's leaders is frequent in the Bible. Moses was tending sheep, the

judge Gideon was threshing wheat, and Samuel was sleeping when God called. In the midst of such mundane activities, God's intervention was often dramatic, but in today's scene we see no appearance of an angel, no burning bush, no mysterious voice in the night. Elijah himself says nothing, but simply throws his cloak over Elisha, perhaps as a symbol of clothing Elisha with the same authority and power of Elijah himself; it may also symbolize that Elijah is taking the young man under his protection.

Whatever the meaning, Elisha clearly understood that Elijah was calling him. He

asks only that he be able to bid his father and mother farewell. His farewell involves much more than saying his goodbyes to his parents. He slaughters all his oxen, uses his plowing equipment for fuel, and feeds his people. He leaves behind all his family, his work, and his wealth. Having left all things, Elisha proceeds to follow Elijah as his attendant.

READING II The freedom that Christians experience, according to Paul, is rooted in Christ's action. It does not come about because of human energy, but

For meditation and context:

Galatians = gah-LAY-shuhnz

Christian "freedom" means we don't have to save ourselves by observing the Law; we keep the Law in order to love fully. Stress only "freedom" in the second line.

The "yoke of slavery": Paul is saying, don't trade one form of slavery for another.

Speak as if to a group you taught and loved that is now backsliding. Persuade them they must hold on to the truth they learned.

God's Law requires "love," not circumcision.

Apparently, Paul is concerned about destructive behaviors among the Galatians.

Make use of the clear balances in these lines to underscore Paul's message of the opposition of "flesh" and "Spirit."

End on a note of Good News: freedom is yours in the Spirit!

because Christ himself has set us free through his saving death and Resurrection. In today's passage, Paul develops how believers are to live with this God-given freedom.

In order to understand freedom, it is necessary also to understand its opposite: enslavement. The "yoke of slavery" to which Paul refers is strict Torah observance, specifically circumcision. Other preachers had insisted on the necessity of circumcision for Gentile believers, but Paul counters that salvation does not come from circumcision or adherence to the

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11 (see 5a)

R. You are my inheritance, O Lord.

Keep me, O God, for in you I take refuge;
I say to the LORD, "My Lord are you."
O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup,
you it is who hold fast my lot.

I bless the LORD who counsels me;
even in the night my heart exhorts me.
I set the LORD ever before me;
with him at my right hand I shall not be
disturbed.

Therefore my heart is glad and my
soul rejoices,
my body, too, abides in confidence,
because you will not abandon my soul to
the netherworld,
nor will you suffer your faithful one to
undergo corruption.

You will show me the path to life,
fullness of joys in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.

READING II Galatians 5:1, 13-18

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians

Brothers and sisters:

For **freedom** Christ set us free;
so stand **firm** and do not submit **again** to the yoke of **slavery**.

For **you** were called for **freedom**, brothers and sisters.

But do **not** use this **freedom**
as an opportunity for the **flesh**;
rather, serve one another through **love**.

For the **whole law** is fulfilled in **one statement**,
namely, *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*.

But if you go on **biting** and **devouring** one another,
beware that you are not **consumed** by one another.

I say, then: **live** by the **Spirit**
and you will certainly not **gratify** the **desire** of the **flesh**.

For the **flesh** has **desires** against the **Spirit**,
and the **Spirit** against the **flesh**;
these are **opposed** to each other,
so that you may **not do** what you **want**.

But if **you** are **guided** by the **Spirit**, you are **not** under the **law**.

Torah, but through Christ. Paul tells his Gentile converts not to submit "again" to the yoke of slavery, since formerly they had been enslaved to idols. Now they should stand firm in resisting a new form of slavery preached by those Paul calls "false brethren."

Paul also makes it clear that freedom is not the same as license. Living in freedom means living by the Spirit, and not in the flesh. By "flesh," Paul means being mired down in things of this world, and enslaved to selfish desires. In the verse following today's reading, he lists a wide vari-

ety of works of the flesh, ranging from sexual immorality to jealousy and even outbursts of fury. But living in the Spirit is totally different. Echoing Jesus' own teaching, Paul sums up the whole law as well as living in the Spirit: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

GOSPEL

The first verse in today's Gospel marks the beginning of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Having called disciples, preached the good news, healed people and exorcised demons in Galilee, Jesus determines (literally, in Greek,