

# THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Elisha = ee-Li-shuh  
Shunem = SHOO-nuhm  
Slight pause between "day" and "Elisha."  
This reading recounts a powerful narrative of generosity and reward. It's almost like a fable and can be proclaimed with that sense of wonder.

Slight pause between "later" and "Elisha."

Slight pause between "Later" and "Elisha."  
Gehazi = geh-HAY-zī

Even emphasis on "this time next year."

## LECTIONARY #97

READING I 2 Kings 4:8–11, 14–16a

### A reading from the second Book of Kings

**One day Elisha came to Shunem,**

where there was a **woman of influence**, who **urged him to dine** with her.

**Afterward, whenever he passed by, he used to stop there to dine.** So she **said** to her **husband**, "I know that **Elisha** is a **holy man of God**."

Since he **visits us often**, let us **arrange** a little **room** on the **roof** and **furnish** it for him with a **bed, table, chair, and lamp**, so that when he **comes** to us he can **stay** there."

Sometime **later Elisha** arrived and **stayed** in the **room overnight**.

**Later Elisha** asked, "Can **something** be **done** for her?"

His servant **Gehazi** answered, "**Yes!**"

She has **no son**, and her **husband** is getting **on in years**."

Elisha said, "**Call her**."

When the **woman** had been **called** and **stood** at the **door**,

Elisha **promised**, "**This time next year** you will be **fondling** a **baby son**."

**READING I** On this Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time, we are invited to reflect on the gifts that come to us when we practice hospitality with no strings attached. Today's first reading tells the story of the prophet Elisha, who regularly stopped at the home of a wealthy couple when he was passing through Shunem, located approximately thirty miles north-east of Samaria, in the land given to the tribe of Issachar, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The woman remains unnamed, but she is the one who first invited Elisha to dinner, and she is the one who told her

husband that they should prepare a room for him to stay when he comes to Shunem, for no other reason than she believed him to be a holy man. Perhaps her wealth gave her privilege, but we should not ignore the fact that most women in the ancient world did not enjoy such power or influence. In response to her generous hospitality, Elisha asks his servant what he might offer as a gift of gratitude, and he learns that she has no son.

This is a very serious problem. Without a son, there was no one to take care of the couple in their old age and no way to pass

on the husband's legacy to the next generation. Ancients thought that the woman determined the gender of their child, so it was her responsibility and shame that they had no son. Therefore, Elisha's prophecy is a huge gift to the couple.

We learn from the verses that follow this reading that the woman is skeptical and pleads with him not to give her false hope (2 Kings 4:16), and Elisha does not disappoint. Just as he prophesied, in the following year she had a healthy son, but tragedy struck when the son complained of a headache and died later that day (2 Kings

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19 (2a)

**R. For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**

The promises of the LORD I will  
sing forever,  
through all generations my mouth shall  
proclaim your faithfulness.  
For you have said, "My kindness is  
established forever";  
in heaven you have confirmed your  
faithfulness.

Blessed the people who know the  
joyful shout;  
in the light of your countenance,  
O LORD, they walk.  
At your name they rejoice all the day,  
and through your justice they are exalted.  
You are the splendor of their strength,  
and by your favor our horn is exalted.  
For to the LORD belongs our shield,  
and to the Holy One of Israel, our king.

READING II Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans**

**Brothers and sisters:**

Are you **unaware** that we who were **baptized** into **Christ Jesus**  
were **baptized** into his **death**?

We were **indeed buried** with him through **baptism** into **death**,  
so that, **just as Christ** was **raised** from the **dead**  
by the **glory** of the **Father**,  
we **too** might **live** in **newness of life**.

If, **then**, we have **died** with **Christ**,  
we **believe** that we shall also **live** with him.

We **know** that **Christ**, **raised** from the **dead**, **dies** no more;  
**death** no longer has **power** over him.

As to his **death**, he **died** to **sin** **once** and for **all**;  
as to his **life**, he **lives** for **God**.

**Consequently**, you **too** must **think** of yourselves as **dead** to **sin**  
and **living** for **God** in **Christ Jesus**.

Paul's argument is staged in two parts. In the first part, he introduces his argument about baptism, death, and life with a question. The question allows the argument to proceed.

4:18-20). This brave and determined woman seeks out Elisha to bring her dead son back to life, which he does, thus rewarding her doubly for her hospitality (2 Kings 4:22-37).

**READING II** As in the most recent Sundays in Ordinary Time, our second reading comes from Paul's Letter to the Romans. Today's reading is an excerpt from his teaching on baptism. Water is a fitting element to be associated with the ritual of baptism, since the Greek word *baptizō* means "to dip, submerge, or immerse." Paul describes baptism as a participation in

the death of Jesus Christ "so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead," we can enter into newness of life and live with Christ. Further, because he understood that death entered the world because of sin, Jesus' resurrection was a triumph over sin and death. Therefore, being submerged in the water is an apt symbol for going into death and emerging from the water is a symbol for coming into new life. Paul goes on to assure his audience that Jesus, now resurrected, will never die again. So too, we are "dead to sin," that is, to our old way of

life, and should consider ourselves "living for God in Christ Jesus."

**GOSPEL**

Today's Gospel reading is taken from a section of Matthew's Gospel sometimes called the "mission discourse." The mission discourse begins with the narrator listing the twelve disciples (Matthew 10:1-4) and describing how Jesus commissioned them to go out among the people of the house of Israel and to teach and heal (Matthew 10:5-15). But before they depart on their mission, Jesus prepares them for what they might

The words of Jesus in this reading, divided into two parts, are challenging. In this first part, Jesus argues for worthiness in his followers based on how they feel about their family members. Then as now, these are hard words to reconcile to the ways we actually feel about our family members. Though unstressed, let the repetitions of “whoever” anchor your proclamation.

The second part of the reading focuses on the spiritual and moral sense of reward that Jesus wants to impart on his disciples and those who would heed his teachings.

**TO KEEP IN MIND**

Pause to break up separate thoughts, set apart significant statements, or indicate major shifts. Never pause in the middle of a thought. Your primary guide for pauses is punctuation.

face along the way; they will face persecution and must muster their courage, but they should also be encouraged because God protects even the sparrows, so why would he not protect them? He also warns them that they will experience Jesus as a source of division in the communities they visit and among families (Matthew 10:16–36).

This is the background for today’s Gospel teaching on discipleship. It is a call to radical discipleship! We are told that we must love Jesus more than father or mother and son or daughter. We must be willing to take up our crosses and follow Jesus even

**GOSPEL** Matthew 10:37–42

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew**

**Jesus said to his apostles:**

“Whoever loves **father** or **mother** more than **me** is not **worthy** of me,  
and whoever loves **son** or **daughter** more than **me** is not **worthy** of me;  
and whoever does not **take up** his **cross**  
and follow **after** me is not **worthy** of me.

Whoever **finds** his **life** will **lose** it,  
and **whoever** loses his **life** for **my** sake will **find** it.

“Whoever receives **you** receives **me**,  
and whoever receives **me** receives the **one** who **sent** me.

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.

And whoever gives only a **cup** of **cold** water  
to one of these **little** ones to **drink**  
because the **little** one is a **disciple**—  
**amen**, I say to you, he will **surely** not lose his reward.”

to death. But as radical as this call to discipleship is, its success depends on a corresponding ministry of hospitality. Ancient cultures of the Near East operated on the patronage system. Patrons were responsible for providing certain protections or resources for their clients, and clients performed certain services for their patron. In some cases, this meant that the client would serve as an agent of the patron such that whatever he said or did in the name of his patron had the power and authority of the patron himself. Thus, the disciples are about to be sent out to be Jesus’ presence

among the people they meet, and, as Jesus’ representatives, they are likewise agents of God. Similarly, if we insist on holding onto what we value in our daily lives, Jesus says that we will lose it. But if we perform acts of hospitality, even if only a cup of water for the least of God’s children, we will receive God’s reward. C.C.