

PARISH OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL & ST SIMON STOCK, CARMELITE CHURCH
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13th Sunday in Ordinary Time – 26 June 2022

Freedom to be Disciples

Two connected ideas are presented to us in our readings today. The first is ‘discipleship’ together with the cost or sacrifices that accompany it while the second is ‘freedom’ to be a disciple.

Let us first consider the idea of discipleship and the cost of it. In Jesus’ ministry, his insistence on going to Jerusalem constitutes the major reason for the fallout with his disciples. We hear from today’s Gospel by St Luke that the Samaritans “did not receive him because he was journeying with his face toward Jerusalem (9:53). And we remember that the episode in Mark’s Gospel when Jesus tells Peter, “get behind me Satan” is in connection with Peter’s attempt to stop him from proceeding to Jerusalem. For the Samaritans, it is probably because they did not believe that Jerusalem was the true place of worship (cf Jn. 4:20). But for the disciples, it is because they knew that Jerusalem was the place of death for prophets. Even some Pharisees who knew that Herod was seeking to kill Jesus also warned him about going to Jerusalem (Lk 13:31-33). From another point of view, the disciples’ understanding of the Messiah was one that excluded suffering. And did they expect that suffering should be their lot as the followers of Jesus. Yet, while everyone wanted to prevent Jesus from going to Jerusalem, we are told that he went ahead “resolutely.” Nothing or no one was going to stop him. He therefore showed his followers that discipleship costs no less than everything and that the Old Testament writings about the suffering Messiah is in fact true. But to be able to afford this cost requires a great amount of freedom, which is why Jesus was quick to point out to the man who requested to follow him that ‘foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’ This brings us then to the second important word for our reflection – freedom.

Freedom is intricately related to discipleship because it is the condition without which it is impossible to bear the cost of discipleship. But what does freedom in this sense mean? Its meaning is highlighted in the two separate dramas in our Gospel. In the first episode, the man to whom Jesus said, ‘Follow me’, replied, ‘Let me go and bury my father first.’ But Jesus answered, ‘Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.’ Burying one’s father was regarded as a sacred duty, and yet not even this may stand in the way of a response to the call of Jesus. In the second episode, another man said, ‘I will follow you, but first let me go and say goodbye to my people at home.’ And Jesus tells him that ‘Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.’ Thus Jesus toughens the condition that Elijah demanded of Elisha in our first reading. There is no backward glance even to bid the family farewell. Therefore neither the most sacred duty nor family ties may stand in the way of the demands of following Jesus. Freedom to follow means extricating oneself from all possible encumbrances that might stand in the way.

In our second reading, St Paul speaks of the freedom that Christ has already granted us: “When Christ freed us, he meant us to be free.’ By this he means that we must not fall back into the yoke

of anything that enslaves us; in other words, anything that might stand in way of our freedom to follow Christ. At the same time, Paul warns that freedom could provide an opening to self-indulgence, which is to say, a preoccupation with keeping the letters of the law as if that is what it means to follow Christ. Instead, St. Paul says that the freedom granted us is the freedom to love our neighbour. For that is what the Spirit of Jesus leads us to do. Paul is, in other words, echoing the canticle of Zechariah that God “swore to Abraham our father to grant us, that free from fear, and saved from the hands of our foes, we might serve him in holiness and justice all the days of our life in his presence.”

Elisha, in our first reading, stands as the example of an appropriate response to Jesus’ call. Let us pray that Jesus may grant us the freedom from whatever may be inhibiting us from following him.

NOTICES

Today is Peter’s Pence Collection – A Tradition of Support for the Holy Father

The Peter’s Pence Collection has a long tradition as a sign that Catholics around the world are joined in support of the Holy Father. Donations to the Peter’s Pence Collection support not only the activities of the Roman Curia that assist the pope in the exercise of his ministry but also solidarity projects that help those most in need. Please donate generously.

Solemnity of SS Peter and Paul 29th June

This week, on Wednesday, we have the Solemnity of SS Peter and Paul. It marks the anniversary of the election of Pope Francis and we are asked to pray for him on this day.

Registration for First Holy Communion

We are also now accepting registrations for the next group of children to prepare for First Holy Communion. Classes will commence in September. If you have children for first holy communion, please do register them ahead of September. Children must be 7yrs old by 31st August. The registration form is on our website www.carmelitechurch.org/activities/catechism-classes or simply email catechism.co-ordinator@carmelitechurch.org and request a form to be sent to you. Thanks

In-Person Refugee Hosting Information Session

Caritas Westminster together with JRS will be facilitating an in-person session on the hosting of refugees for anybody who is currently hosting, is curious, or would like to learn more. Date is 28th June, 6 – 8.30pm at Hurtado Jesuit Centre, 2 Chandler St, London E1W 2QT
To attend, and for more information, sign-up via [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com)

Bereavement Support Group in our Parish

Are you grieving the loss of a loved one? Why not join our Bereavement Support Group. We will meet at the Parish Centre on Wednesdays from 4.00pm – 5.30pm. For more information please contact Dani at danidegeorge@yahoo.co.uk

<u>Collections Last Sunday</u>	Offering	£1683
	Gift Aid Envelopes	£88

Thank you for your generosity

Fr. Thaddeus, OCD