

# Sunday Homily

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

26 JUNE 2022

YEAR C

“But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Luke 9:60

### Illustration

A letter once arrived on a bishop's desk containing a cheque for several million pounds. The letter was from a rich businessman who wanted to pay for a cathedral to be built in the poor city in which he had grown up. He was prepared to give this vast sum of money to ensure that the shabby place at least had a magnificent monument which generations of people would come to visit and appreciate; its beauty, if not its location.

The bishop hesitated for just a moment as he contemplated what a beautiful building it could be. What a gift to honour God. But then he thought of the thousands of people living in overcrowded, makeshift homes in the slum area within the city. These places were unfit for living, let alone raising children. Children lived on the street, prey to abuse from adults and the increasing drug culture, which deadened their hopelessness for a few hours. The bishop carefully placed the cheque in an envelope with a handwritten note. He thanked the businessman kindly for his generosity, which God would surely reward, but politely explained that the city needed many things before a cathedral.

### Gospel Teaching

In today's Gospel we are introduced to three people who were potential followers of Jesus, all of whom are presented with options concerning discipleship: to make a decision between two different "goods", between what is good and what is best. These are sincere people who are worthy to be called as disciples; Jesus recognised their potential. They had work, families and the usual responsibilities to which they wanted to remain loyal.

The first needed to know that physical hardship was probably part of discipleship: Jesus' movement had no money apart from donations, no secure base, no comfortable bed. For the second, burying a dead parent was the solemn duty of a Jewish son, no one else. Failing to do so would be regarded as a gross act of betrayal. For the third, it was only natural to expect an expression of farewell to loved ones before an epic change of life, into an unknown future.

In the way that Jesus responds to these three people, it can almost sound as though he is trying to put them off. Does he not, then, want them to be his followers? They thought they were doing him a favour by offering to join him, but Jesus seems dubious.

Jesus did not mean to be as heartless as he sounded; he was simply being truthful with his followers – making it quite clear that the life upon which they were embarking would be unlike anything previously experienced. It would take courage and daring, superseding even the power of family ties – the greatest of all Jewish responsibilities. To follow Christ is to be prepared to sacrifice those things held most dear to us, even though we may not be called to do so very often – to choose between the good and what Jesus offers: the very best there is.

## Application

Many of the things which God calls us to do these days as Christians do not involve such sacrifices. We are not often called upon to choose between the good and the best. Our decisions are more likely to be in our actions, how we speak, what we say, how we apportion our resources, how we conduct relationships. Sometimes these may prove to be difficult choices, to the extent of even giving things up when it is a decision between right and wrong behaviour, based on what we know are Christian values: performing works of love instead of snapping at each other; rejecting the kind of behaviour which only benefits ourselves; being generous with self as well as resources. Christian life is not easy, especially in the world as it is. We all need God's strength if we are to remain free from sin. But right and wrong are fairly clear.

But how do we choose between, let us say, going to church or remaining at home to care for an elderly, infirm person who appreciates our company? We may not always find what appears at first sight to be the right answer. But if our decision after prayer is based on what Jesus taught about self-offering love, we shall not be wrong. And we, like the bishop in his tough decision, shall be following Jesus in the best way we know, by actions which proclaim the kingdom of God.