

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

[Reading I: 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19](#)

[Reading II: Romans 6:3-4, 8-11](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 10:37-42](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/070223.cfm>



The first reading from the Second Kings and the Gospel both draw attention to the prophetic ministry and the virtue of hospitality. Elisha is a central figure in the Second Book of Kings. He is the successor to Elijah, whom he saw depart in the fiery chariot (II Kings 2: 9ff) Jesus also has aspects of the prophetic ministry displayed in his life.

The ministry of prophets is often confused with various preconceptions. Some envision prophets as foretelling the future. Others present them as mystical figures with powerful manifestations. Finally, some emphasize the unique lifestyles that they live. All of these miss the central role of the prophet.

Prophecy is not about foretelling the future as with a crystal ball. The prophets speak the truth, and the truth has consequences. If you continue this path, pain, and suffering will result, but if you change, blessings and joy will fill your life. The prophets have two vantage points from which they speak. On one side is destruction: your actions, greed, and rejection of God will bring great suffering. Suffering, though, is not the end. The prophets also offer a new vision that flows from the prophetic imagination.

The prophet in the scriptures is one who bears God's word. "The woman said to Elijah, "Now indeed, I know that you are a man of God, and it is truly the word of the LORD that you speak." (I Kings 17: 24) The call to prophet ministry is a call to intimacy with God and opening yourself to allow God's word to dwell in you. As Ezekiel begins his ministry, he is given a scroll to eat and then was charged to speak to the people. (Ezekiel 3, 1-4) The other manifestations that are evident in the life of the prophets flow from their intimacy with God.

Prophets offered a vision, an expanded awareness, and a God-vision that challenged the accepted mindset. The dominant mindset in ancient Israel was a monarchical system. Keeping the monarchy and ensuring everything was safe and comfortable for those at the top was the accepted vision of society. Prophets came to announce a different vision for society: trust in God, care for the poor rather than the prominent of society, and true worship, offering one's mind and heart to God, rather than the right animal sacrifice at the temple.

Jesus reaffirms this vision by challenging the prevailing focus on the minutia of the Law (tithing mint leaves) with calls for forgiveness, care for others, and being children of God. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 – 7) shows Jesus challenging a legal understanding of the Law and offering a broader vision. (You have heard, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you." (Matt 5: 43-44) Thus, we are challenged to always seek God's vision in our lives and through all the changes that we face. No practice, no law, no way of doing things is absolute. God is the only absolute. This will often result in disrupted relationships, being rejected, and sometimes suffering or death. Thus, Jesus warns that a disciple cannot place individuals and their demands ahead of the relationship with God, not even family. When the family works to grow closer to God, then the family is a support rather than a hindrance.

The readings also address hospitality. Hospitality is rooted in generosity. It offers attention and assistance to those who come into our lives without expectation of something in return. The woman from Shunem offered Elisha food and a place to stay because he was a man of God. She did not try to get something from him but only wanted to honor him. We, too, are called to be hospitable people. To share our time, resources, and talents with others is hospitality. This can be a one-on-one interaction or by coaching, teaching, mentoring, or advocating for others. Central to this is recognizing that the gifts one has will enrich others, and this is done out of gratitude to God, who has given them to us. Whenever we are looking to advance our agenda, gain an advantage, or make someone indebted to us, we are not being hospitable, but rather we are self-centered.

Paul's letter to Romans offers a clear and profound understanding of baptism. People are transformed in baptism. They are freed from the old life of selfishness, controlling everything, and the allurements of power, pride, and possessions. Baptism marks the beginning of a new way of life with new meaning, purpose, and vision. It is a life guided by the Spirit who guided Jesus in his ministry. Our life is now living in tandem with Jesus as we live, work, and love. It initiates us into a journey that lasts our whole life of becoming more like Christ as the Holy Spirit empowers us. Christian Initiation is not the goal but the new beginning.

Themes

Hospitality	Baptism
Dying and Rising in Christ	Sacrifice

Reflection Questions

Have you experienced having your vision opened to a new way of perceiving a situation?

Who has been a bearer of God's Word to you?

Think of a time in which you experienced real hospitality. What did someone do for you?

For those who have been baptized, what does your baptism mean to you?

For those who are not baptized, why do you desire baptism, and what will it mean for you?

Prayer suggestions

For the Church: that we who have died with Christ in baptism may recognize our dignity in being children of God and sisters and brothers to one another

For wisdom: that we may embrace the paradox that our effort to control life produces no results while surrendering to God will provide abundant life

For a spirit of hospitality: that we may welcome all who enter our lives as we would welcome Christ with great love and generously share our time and talents with them

For greater perseverance: that God will give strength and hope to all who suffer because they practice the values and principles of the Gospel and help them never to give up

For a reordering of our pursuits: that God will free us from idolatrous struggles for power, fame, social status, and possessions and help us find fulfillment in loving service and life-giving relationships