



Homily Notes

May 1, 2016: V Sunday of Easter

Acts 14:1-2, 22-29 Rev 21:10-14, 22-23 Jn 14:23-29

Loving an Absent Jesus

In Africa young girls who consecrate themselves to God as nuns dress up as brides for a wedding and sing love songs to Jesus. A few years after such a religious ceremony, a young nun who had been having a rough time in her mission assignment comes back to the convent and asks the Mother Superior: “Mother, is it really true that we are spouses of Christ.” “Yes, it is true, my daughter,” replied the Mother Superior, “Why do you ask?” “Well,” stammered the young nun, “Since I was professed five years ago, I haven’t actually felt anything!”

Our poor nun may not have felt anything, yet she remains on the right track in understanding the relationship between Jesus and his devotees in terms of an intimate love relationship. When Jesus speaks in today’s gospel of **“those who love me”** he is referring to his followers. For Jesus “those who love me” is another way of saying “my disciples” or “those who believe in me” or simply “Christians.” The relationship between the Christian and Christ is essentially a love relationship. That is why Jesus said in John 15:15 **“I do not call you servants any longer ... I call you friends.”** Yet many of us feel more comfortable serving Jesus as boss rather than relating to him as a friend. There is a limit to what a boss can demand from you. There is no such limit when it comes to friendship and intimacy.

One thing we know about love is that lovers want to be with each other. But Jesus is not physically present. We cannot physically see him or touch him. This is the dilemma we see in the problem of the young nun. How can you love an absent Jesus? This is what today’s gospel is all about. In the gospel Jesus prepares his disciples, those who love him, for his departure from this world and shows them how they can keep love and intimacy alive even in

his physical absence. “ **Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them**” (John 14:23).

If you love Jesus (1) Keep his word. Follow his teachings. (2) This will activate God’s special love for you, and (3) Jesus and his Father will come and live permanently with you. In this way the vacuum left by the physical absence of Jesus will be filled spiritually by the divine presence which is as real or even more real than the physical presence. Our part in this whole process is to focus on keeping the word of Christ.

But how do we make sure we know the implication and meaning of the word of Christ in the ever changing and ever more complex realities of modern life? How can we be sure what Jesus would do and how he would act in the present concrete situations of our daily lives? Again Jesus foresaw this difficulty and provided for it. “**The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you**” (John 14:26). But what about the situation in the world today where a thousand Christians all “filled with the Holy Spirit” come up with a thousand different answers to the same question? Does the Holy Spirit contradict Himself? Here it is important to note that the “you” to whom these promises are made is plural, meaning, primarily, the community of believers, the church. Of course the Holy Spirit is with us individually, but the Holy Spirit is given primarily to the church and, through the church, to us as individuals when we become members of the church.

This is what we see in the 1st reading where disagreements among Christians are resolved through dialogue and community discernment and not through each one consulting the Holy Spirit privately. In the end they come out with a resolution which begins “**it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.**” (Acts 15:28). The word of Christ continues to live and resound in the word of the Holy Spirit speaking through the church. The days between the Ascension of Christ and Pentecost are special days of prayer for all Christians as they were for the first disciples of Jesus. This year let us pray especially for the gift of church unity, so that together we all can discern what the Spirit is saying to the church in the modern world and so bear united witness to the life-giving word of Christ. --**Munachi E. Ezeogu, cssp**

May 8, 2016: Ascension of Our Lord

Acts 1:1-11 Heb 9:24-28; 10:19-23 Luke 24:46-53

The Eternal Priest Enters the Sanctuary

In his book *Written in Blood*, Robert Coleman tells the story of a little girl, Mary, who was ill and needed a blood transfusion. Her little brother, Johnny, had suffered from the same disease and had recovered two years earlier. Since her best chance of recovery was a transfusion from someone who had recovered from the disease, her little brother was identified as the ideal donor. “Would you give your blood to Mary?” the doctor asked. Johnny hesitated. He began to tremble. Then he smiled and said, “Sure, for my sister.” Soon the two kids were wheeled into the hospital room. Neither of them spoke, but when their eyes met, Johnny grinned. As the nurse inserted the needle into his arm, Johnny’s smile faded. Johnny watched his blood flow through the tube. When the ordeal was over, Johnny’s shaky voice broke the silence. “Doctor, when do I die?” It was only then that the doctor realize why Johnny had hesitated, why he trembled before he agreed to donate his blood. He thought giving his blood to his sister meant giving up his life. When he agreed to give the blood, Johnny had agreed to die so that his sister would live. Fortunately, Johnny did not have to die to save his sister.

Blood was a crucial commodity in the temple worship in Jerusalem. Much of the work of the priests involved slaughtering animals and shedding their blood to make atonement for sin, and sprinkling the people with blood to cleanse them from guilt. The reason for this was because, as the author of *Hebrews* explains, **“Under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins** (Hebrews 9:22). The most important institution in the covenant relationship of the Jewish people with God was not the king who ruled in God’s name, or the prophet who spoke the word of God, but the priest who offered the blood sacrifice that took away the sins of the people and restored them to God’s favour. In the people’s dealings with God, the priest was the number one mediator, since **“Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins** (Hebrews 5:1).”

Jesus did not identify himself as a priest or describe the role of his disciples as that of priesthood. The earliest Christians still worshiped in the temple and benefitted from the ministry of temple priests. When the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 and the people had no more sacrifice, Jewish Christians began to understand that the sacrifice of animals in the temple was no longer

necessary because Jesus has made once-and-for-all the only sacrifice of blood that pleased God. By the time *Hebrews* was written, Jewish Christians had come to see Jesus as the priest *par excellence*. Compared to the priesthood of Jesus, the priesthood of the temple was only a shadow.

The ascension of Christ into heaven where he sits at God's right hand making intercession for God's people is compared to the temple priest going up the steps into the sanctuary (the holy place) to offer sacrifice. But the sacrifice of Christ is infinitely superior. Today's 2nd reading shows us three ways in which Christ's sacrifice is superior to that of the temple priest. Firstly, unlike the case of the temple priesthood, **"Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf"**(9:24). Secondly, the temple sacrifice was limited in its effect, hence it was offered constantly year after year. Christ's sacrifice was once and for all time (verses 25- 26). Finally, the temple priest offered the blood of lambs, but Christ has offered **"the sacrifice of himself"**(verse 26). The blood of the Son of God is infinitely more powerful than the blood of animals to take away our sins and cleanse us in such a way that we appear unblemished in God's sight.

As today we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord, let us not mourn the disappearance of Christ. Let us rather celebrate his going up into the eternal holy place, God's very presence, to make atonement for us. **"And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful"**(10:21-23).
--Munachi E. Ezeogu, cssp

May 15, 2016: The Pentecost

Acts 2:1-11 Rom 8:1-17 Joh 14:15-16,23-26

Enkindle in Us the Fire of Your Love

One bright Sunday morning like today, Benson's mother hurries into her son's bedroom and wakes him up. "Benson, it's Sunday. Time to get up! Time to get up and go to church! Get up!" Benson mumbles from under the covers, "I don't want to go." "What do you mean you don't want to go?" says the mother. "That's silly. Now get up and get dressed and go to church!" Benson goes, "No, I don't want to go and I'll give you two reasons why I don't want to go." He sits up on the bed and continues, "First, I don't like them and second, they don't like me." His mother replies, "Now, that's

just plain nonsense. You've got to go to church and I'll give you two reasons why you must. First, you're now forty years old and, second, you're the pastor!"

This sleepy Benson could as well be any of the apostles whom Jesus had commissioned to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of the earth. But as soon as Jesus leaves them, what do they do? They retire to their upper rooms and hide themselves. They were afraid of the Jews. Like Benson they knew that the people did not like them, they knew that their message was different from the popular message of the time, and they just felt like wrapping themselves up in bed and not having to get up and face the hostile society. We too are often like that, going to church quietly, receiving Jesus in our hearts quietly, and going home again quietly to say our morning and evening prayers quietly. But what about the charge that Jesus left for you and me to be his witnesses and to share the Good News of God's love with all humankind? No. People do not like to be reminded of God. I am afraid they are going to tell me off if I speak to them about God. I am afraid they will not listen to me. I am afraid they will call me a freak out of touch with reality. They don't like us and we don't like them. And so, like Benson, we give up on our God-given duty and go on enjoying our comfortable silence, our comfortable sleep.

Fortunately, Pastor Benson has a guide, his mother, who wakes him and persuades him to go out and preach. This is the kind of work that the Holy Spirit does in the hearts of believers. When fear of trouble tends to freeze our faith into silent submission to despair, the Holy Spirit warms us up and empowers us to go out there and make a difference. The Holy Spirit reminds us, as Benson's mother reminded him, that we have a mission. Our mission is to tell everybody the Good News that God is their Father, that God is the Father of us all, that in spite of all the visible difference of language and culture and social status, we are all one family and should therefore live as brothers and sisters. Our mission is to break the barriers between "us" and "them," between male and female, between Jew and Gentile, between rich and poor, between Black and White, between First World and Third World, and to bring all humankind to speak the one universal language of brotherly/sisterly love. This is possible only through the working of the Holy Spirit.

One reason his mother gave Benson why he should wake up from his sleep is that he is now forty years old. He is now of age. Christianity is now 2000 years old in the world. Yet even in the so-called Christian civilizations, the universal brotherhood of all humankind in God through Christ has not been

understood. “What can I do?” you may say, “I am only a single individual. What difference can I make?” Maybe we can learn something from the story of the black squirrel and the owl.

A black squirrel once asked a wise old owl what was the weight of a single snowflake. “Why, nothing more than nothing,” the owl answered. The squirrel then went on to tell the owl about a time when he was resting on a branch of a maple tree, counting each snowflake that came to rest on the branch until he reached the number 1,973,864. Then with the settling of the very next flake -- crack! The branch suddenly snapped, throwing the squirrel and the snow to the ground. “That was surely a whole lot of nothing,” said the squirrel.

You daily personal efforts to spread the reign of love and justice may be as lightweight as snowflakes. But by heaping our snowflakes together we shall eventually be able to break the heavy branch of sin, evil and injustice growing in our world today. **“Come Holy Spirit and fill the heart of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love.”**
--Munachi E. Ezeogu, cssp

May 22, 2016: Most Holy Trinity Sunday

Prov 8:22-31; Rom 5:1-5; Jn 16:12-15

What is it like to be Triune God?

Trinity is not a myth but it is a mystery. A myth is unreal but conceivable. A mystery is real but incomprehensible. Today is the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, a mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations but was made manifest by Christ. He spoke of God as his Father saying, “All that Father has belongs to me.” (Jn 16:15); he often called himself “the Son of God”, and he spoke of the third divine person as “the Spirit of truth” (Jn 16:13). Like all mysteries, Trinity is also a mind-boggling puzzle. To some it is an annoying riddle. But we need not be surprised at this, for it is about the all-powerful God who made the stars and the planets. It is about a God whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.

Whatever may be the depth of our understanding of the Trinity, it will still remain a mystery. Hence instead of worrying ourselves about “how can one God be three persons?” it is better to ask a more useful question, which could be this: “what is it like to be God?” to think of it, it is like asking someone from Australia, “What is it like to be an Australian?” The answer is obvious. You will never know what it is like to be an Australian unless you live as they live and learn to see their country from the inside, and see it as

they see it. You would have to fall in love with Australia before you could know what it is like to be an Australian. So it is with God. To know what it is like to be God, we must get closer to God and start living a life of intimacy with him. And to live such a life of intimacy with God is not impossible for Christians, because our God already dwells in every believer. As St Paul says, "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). God is closer to us than we can imagine. As fish inhabits the sea and birds the air, we live in the atmosphere of the Triune God. Hence, we need not search for him beyond the stars.

By living close to the Trinity who dwells within us, we cannot only have some idea about what it is like to be God, but also we will start living like God. This will be so because God as Trinity is like three candles but one light; and anyone who comes near the light cannot but be lit up. If we start living like the Triune God, we will find our life changing for the better. For example, since God as Trinity lives a group life, we too will shed our isolated existence. Since God as Trinity lives a community life, so too will we care for each other and stop saying, "I will attend to myself and God and then mind my own business." In other words, those who are close to the Trinity will start living their lives in the right way. Today so many people claim that they know the way to live, but unfortunately each claim conflicts with the other. For instance, the film and television industries have their gospel, the gambling strips of modern cities have theirs. The print industry and political heavy weights have their own version. In spite of all these confusing messages as to how to live, it is those who live like the Triune God who have learnt the right way.

--Dn. Vikas Jason

May 29, 2016: Corpus Christi

Genesis 14:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Luke 9:11b-17

Body and Blood of Christ

The gospel of today brings to us the very familiar passage about the multiplication of bread and fish. This miracle is found in the synoptic gospels and also John. Jesus broke the five loaves and two fish to feed the hungry because he had compassion for them. We are all called to break ourselves of our selfishness, ego-centredness and give our lives for the need of the world of today. Christ broke himself for the world. We are called to do the same. His blood was shed for our sanctification and redemption, replacing the old ways of sacrificing. Blood signifies life. Through the shedding of his blood, he paid the price for our shortcomings. We are called

to give life to the lifeless, perhaps to those in our vicinity in need of human compassion.

Jesus asks us to remember him through this commemoration. He left us a perfect sacrifice to be continued until we shall see him face-to-face one day. The Eucharist is the highest form of Christian worship. It unites people of all races and culture. Unity is the sign of the working of the spirit because the spirit unites. Paul in the second reading affirms that the communion that we share in the breaking of the bread is a true sign of communion which is to be continued until the Lord comes. The symbol of bread and wine is also powerfully portrayed in the first reading of today when Mechizedek, the priest and king offered prayers to God through the bread and wine for the welfare of Abram. In the Gospel, Jesus offered himself up to the Father through this memorial sacrifice. Every time we come for the celebration of the Eucharist, we are called to remember the Paschal Mystery.

--Deacon Vekupa Rhakho George

June 5, 2016: X Sunday of Ordinary Time

1 Kgs 17: 17-24, Gal 1: 11-19 and Lk 7: 11-17

You Are Under Arrest

We live in a world, where chaos and hatred have become the order of the day. The moment we turn on the television or try to have a glance at the newspaper, it shouts back at us with news of someone being cut down, raped, abused, tortured, kidnapped and even traumatised. Sadly, these terrible things do not remain in the newspapers. They happen in real life too. If anyone has never been involved in pain and suffering in one's life, then they might be the luckiest ones alive. Every human being is drawn up into one form of anguish or another, either being victimised or being the victimiser, either being the one who is hurt or the one who hurts. But today, we have a special and interesting message for all of us in this heartless world. Think of someone who could arrest you for all the pain and suffering you have caused in your life. This arrest is not a normal handcuff on your wrists, but someone who grips your heart and your whole self.

Today's first reading and Gospel are mirror reflections. The first reading shows how Elijah revives the widow's only son from the clutches of death. She is the same widow from Zarephath who shared the last morsel of flour and last drop of oil to Elijah. The point here is, in spite of not being from Israel, she never blames God for the misfortune of death, unlike most of the Jewish people portrayed in the Gospels. She is in anguish because her past sins are remembered at a crucial time in life where she has no one else to depend

upon for her existence. As Elijah stretches out three times over the boy, it makes her realise that God can restore life and most importantly, that he is a man of God. It is an experience where both the widow is arrested by God to realise about the power of life and Elijah is arrested by God to have a more solid belief in him.

The second reading from the letter to the Galatians is a classic example of how Paul who was hell-bent on devastating the new Christ movement, making a 360 degree turn to be madly convinced about spreading the name of Christ, even to the point of death. This too, is Paul being arrested by God, to turn himself from being a victimiser to being a victim for Christ and his people.

The Gospel is more precisely an echo of 2 Kings 4:18-37 where Prophet Elisha raises up the Shunnamite widow's son. Moving away from the technical details the Gospel brings out the strongest portrayal of emotions, emotions which we too can relate in our lives. The painful emotion of sorrow has been conveyed by the evangelist not by the description of the funeral procession at the gates of the city, but by stating that it was the widow's only son who had died. One can try to imagine the pain of someone close to you leaving one's earthly abode forever. The evangelist even brings out the emotions of Jesus towards this incident. Never ever has anyone mentioned a strong emotion in the life of Jesus as he being moved 'from the depths of his heart.' It was a time in the history of Judaism where Stoicism and apathy was considered to be a noble virtue. It was a time when a person who went beyond the limitations of emotions was considered to be someone great.

Our God does not hide his humanness. Our God understands the pain and suffering which we undergo. The mystery of incarnation has opened ourselves to God just as God had been opened to ourselves. Jesus moved by this feeling for the small family reaches out and touches the funeral mat of the young man. Jesus reaches out to restore life into the lifeless, to bring back the joy of being alive. Jesus arrests the young man and brings him back to life. Even the people there acknowledge that he is the Son of God.

It is extremely difficult to rely on God in times of our sorrow, pain and afflictions which have been unjustly laden upon us. It becomes hard to shield the flickering flame of faith from the winds of anguish and disturbance. It is in this situation, where we must ask God to give us the grace to stay strong amidst the storms of emotional and physical sufferings. God will surely arrest us and give us a direction for our life. Jesus is always there to arrest you in your sorrows, pain, and anguish, in order to bring you

back to the fullness of life. In order to be arrested by God today, there is no need to put your hands up. All you have to do is open your heart and lift it up to Him, be strong in your faith and let God be the one responsible to being you back to the fullness of life.

--Dn.Romal

June 12, 2016: XI Sunday of the Year

2 Sam 12:7-10, 13

Gal 2:15-16, 19-20

Luk 7:36-8:3

The Cookie Thief

Today's gospel reminds one of the story of the cookie thief. A woman at the airport waiting to catch her flight bought herself a bag of cookies, settled in a chair in the airport lounge and began to read her book. Suddenly she noticed the man beside her helping himself with cookies from the cookie bag between them. Not wanting to make a scene, she read on, ate cookies, and watched the clock. As the daring "cookie thief" kept on eating the cookies she got more irritated and said to herself, "If I wasn't so nice, I'd blacken his eye!" With each cookie she took, he took one too. When only one was left, she wondered what he would do. Then with a smile on his face and a nervous laugh, he took the last cookie and broke it in half. He offered her half, and he ate the other. She snatched it from him and thought, "Oh brother, this guy has some nerve, and he's also so rude, why, he didn't even show any gratitude!" She sighed with relief when her flight was called. She gathered her belongings and headed for the gate, refusing to look at the ungrateful "thief." She boarded the plane and sank in her seat, then reached in her baggage to fetch her book, and what she saw made her gasp with surprise. For there in front of her eyes were her bag of cookies. Then it dawned on her that the cookies they ate in the lounge was the man's and not hers, that the man was not a thief but a friend who tried to share, that she was the rude one, the ungrateful one, the thief.

The cookie thief story reminds us, as we see in today's gospel, that it often happens that the one pointing the accusing finger turns out to be the guilty one, that the complainant sometimes turns out to be the offending party. In the cookie story, the woman believed she was such a wonderful person to put up with the rudeness and ingratitude of the man sitting beside her. In the end she discovered that she was the rude and ungrateful one and the man was wonderfully friendly. In the gospel the Pharisee thinks he is the righteous one who is worthy to be in the company of Jesus and that the woman was the sinful one unworthy to be seen with Jesus. In the end Jesus showed each of them where they really belonged and the woman was seen as the one who was righteous and more deserving of the company of Jesus than the self-righteous Pharisee.

Why do things like this happen? Well, because it is easier to hear the snoring of the other person than it is to hear your own snoring. It is easy to notice the fault of other people while being blind to our own faults. Great men and women of God have been, all without exception, people who are so aware of their own inadequacies that they are hardly surprised at other people's shortcomings. People who delight in criticising others thereby betray their lack of self-awareness. In the end they discover that they themselves are indeed the cookie thieves that they accused others to be.

But what was the mistake of the Pharisee? If the woman was indeed a prostitute where then did he err? After all what he said about the woman was true, wasn't it? Of course the woman was a sinner. Jesus did not say that the woman was not a sinner. Jesus only said that the man was a sinner too, and in fact a worse sinner than the woman.

I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love (Luke 7:44-47).

The problem of the Pharisee was his notion of sin and holiness. For him the woman was an "occasion of sin" to be avoided by godly people. Jesus corrects him: it is not what you avoid that counts, it is what you do. The Pharisee might indeed have avoided occasions of sin, but he did nothing for Jesus in need. The woman, on the other hand, attended to the practical needs of Jesus. Jesus accepts the woman's external show of love as a clear manifestation of inner faith: **"Your faith has saved you; go in peace"** (v.50). This practical engagement is the crucial difference between her and the Pharisee. How do we employ our faith in practical service of the needy?

Today's gospel is good news indeed to all who have been humiliated by the "good people" of this world, humiliated in a supposed concern to maintain the standard of holiness in the household of God. Jesus assures them that they are indeed closer to the heart of God than their accusers have made them to believe. And to those who, like the Pharisee, feel that Jesus is their exclusive birthright, the Good News for them today is simple: Watch it, lest in the end you discover that it is you who are the cookie thief after all.

-- **Munachi E. Ezeogu, cssp**

June 19, 2016: XII Sunday of the Year
Zech 12:10-11 Gal 3:23-29 Luke 9:18-22

The Challenge of Faith

Among the fables of Aesop is one entitled *The Hunter and the Woodman*. A Hunter was searching for the tracks of a Lion. He asked a man felling oaks in the forest if he had seen any marks of the lion's footsteps or knew where his lair was. "Oh yes," said the Woodman, "I will take you to the Lion himself." The Hunter turned pale from fear and stuttered, "No, thanks. I did not ask that; it is only his track that I am looking for, not the Lion himself." In our dealings with God and with one another we are often like this hunter. We profess that we stand for something but when the full implication of what we profess stares us in the face we draw back.

This is what we see in today's gospel story. Peter, speaking for himself and for the disciples, rightly confesses his faith in Jesus as the long-expected Messiah. When Jesus reveals to him and the disciples the implications of his being the Messiah they begin to draw back. By confessing Jesus as the Messiah the disciples show that they have gone above the level of the "people" who take Jesus to be nothing more than a prophet. Jesus then proceeds to tell them the implications of what they had just said: **"The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."** (Luke 9:22). Now, the disciples are not ready for this. They are looking for the footprints of the lion and Jesus offers to take them face to face with the lion. They begin to withdraw. This withdrawing is more dramatic in the gospel of Matthew where Peter takes Jesus aside and tries to talk him out of the suffering and death he was destined to undergo. But Jesus would shun him and dub him Satan for seeing things from the purely human rather than from God's point of view. Luke's version of the story which we read today focuses on the disciples as a whole and not particularly on Peter. This might explain why it does not include the dialogue and the incident between Jesus and Peter after Peter had made the all-important confession. Rather Luke shows the disciples pulling back from Jesus at his arrest, suffering and death, which shows that they do not understand the implication of the faith they profess in Jesus as the Messiah.

Peter and the disciples are to be commended for the courage to think for themselves. Jesus shows that he expects his followers to think for themselves when he asks them first, **"Who do the crowds say that I am?"** (v. 18), and then the all-important question: **"But who do you say that I am?"** (v. 20). Disciples must inform themselves on what the current

thinking is on any given issue. One can achieve that by reading books, listening to the radio, watching the television and surfing the internet. Over and above that, disciples must then, in light of Christian faith and revelation, make up their minds on the issues. Christians must not allow themselves to internalize the voice of the “people” such that the voice of the “people” becomes the voice of their conscience. This is what Paul is telling us in Romans 12:2 **“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.”** As people of faith Jesus asks us to *know* what “people” around us are thinking, but not necessary to *endorse* what they are thinking. Like the prophets of old, faithfulness to God demands that we follow the voice of God within us, which we call conscience, rather than popular opinion.

Nevertheless, discerning what God is saying to us is only the first part of our challenge as Christians. The second and even more deciding part is following in practical life the implications of what God is saying to us. This is the crucial moment. This is facing up to the lion – the lion that must be confronted before justice and peace can prevail. Anything short of this and we are like the hunter searching for the lion trail and not the lion himself. Such a hunter achieves nothing at the end of the day. Soon we shall all be invited, like the disciples, to proclaim our faith in Christ. Let us promise God that we shall not pull back when the implications and challenges of faith dawn on us in our day-to-day lives. **--Munachi E. Ezeogu, cssp**

June 26, 2016: XIII Sunday of the Year

1 Kgs 19:16b, 19-21; Gal 5:1, 13-18; Luke 9:51-62

Called to Love

Christian call is a call to love the other as oneself. There is nothing greater than to love and give one’s life for the other. Christ is the perfect example of this and we are all called to imitate this perfect love of Christ. The second reading of today exhorts you and me about this great virtue called love.

The call that we received is an uncompromising love. We are asked not to turn back once we set foot to the kingdom mission. This is a forward-looking mission to the eschatological times. Our hope is in the Lord who made heaven and earth and who sent his only son to redeem the world out of love for humanity. Jesus came for a purpose and He was firm at it. Nothing on earth could deviate him from the mission for which He came. He rebuked the apostles for their myopic vision. Despite the fact that Jesus was

continually showing them the values of the kingdom, yet they were sometimes hard-hearted.

All the readings of today asks us to be forward-looking. In the first reading of today, we hear the call of Elisha. He left everything and followed Elijah. The second reading of today exhorts us to be free from the anchors of slavery to sin because we are made free through the one-time sacrifice which Christ underwent for us. Therefore if the Son makes us free, we are free indeed (cf. Jn 8:36)! Christ came and freed us. We are liberated beings set apart for the kingdom mission just as Paul was (cf. Rom 1:1). That Christ who died and rose again is very much alive and active in our midst. We are called to herald this good news to the ends of the world.

--Deacon Vekupa Rhakho George

(Due to scarcity of space Book Review is left out for this issue)

Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeth, Pune, is happy to announce Distance Education from June 2016 onwards. For more details, see www.jdv.edu.in