

Thirteenth Sunday of the Year

June 26, 2005

2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16a; Romans 6:3-4, 8-11; Matthew 10:37-42

Preacher: *Deborah Marie Butcher, OP*

Today's Gospel reading concludes Matthew's account of Jesus' second discourse, the great missionary discourse in which Jesus instructs his twelve disciples.

The task of a disciple is not to be taken lightly. It is a whole-hearted commitment! Jesus says that anyone who puts parents or children before Him isn't worthy of Him. The unity of the family of Jesus is more important than the unity of the natural family. Jesus is quite clear that we must love Him and one another more than our own family. In the family of Jesus' followers there is no longer an "in" crowd, an "out" crowd, or an "us" vs. "them". Those who rightly claim privilege on our time, talents, gifts and resources are our neighbor, the poor, the oppressed. The Jesus family is one of invitation, of unconditional love and unlimited forgiveness. A disciple must be prepared for the radical demands of love which extend to all—not just to those to whom there is an obligation as with members of one's own family or friends!

Jesus' followers are invited to take up their cross and follow Him. Those who lose their lives for Jesus' sake will gain real life for themselves. Those who welcome or help a disciple of Jesus will be rewarded as if they had done it to Him. Even death on the cross is not too high a price to pay if one is to be a true disciple. Jesus doesn't ask us to take up everyone's cross—just our own. To whom will we give a glass of cool water, a smile, a parking space, five minutes or an hour of our time? How often do we prefer our own agenda, concerns or friends? Will we die a little by entering someone else's world, hurts, interests, or loves? If we can do this which takes a strongly-bound community, we will discover **real** life and we will belong to the family of Jesus as true disciples!