

Homily – 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time, C 2019
by Rev. Bob Schramm, OSFS

In the first reading, Elijah responds negatively to Elisha's desire to go home first.

“Go back!” Elijah says to Elisha —
and the old man seems to imply, “who wants you anyway?”

Finally, the young Elisha gets it:

he slaughters the oxen, makes firewood of the plough, feeds his family
and follows Elijah.

In the Gospel today, Jesus won't take “give me some time” for an answer.
There is a certain urgency to God's call, in the call of Jesus.

Someone has wisely said, “It is undeniably easier to stay at home
in the midst of what is small and familiar
than to hazard the perils that come with answering a great call.”

One of the themes of this particular Sunday liturgy is
that each of us has been given “the great call.”
EACH of us has a vocation.

Here's a little piece of my vocation story.

This happened 60 years ago,
right after I had graduated from high school.
I had just begun my freshman year at a previously unheard of place
called St. Mary's College in Winona, Minn.
It was 500 miles from home.
You can bet I was one lost, lonely kid.

My girlfriend at the time was a freshman at the University of Michigan.
Her name was Barb.
There were no cell phones or internet back then.
Long distance phone calls were very expensive.
Writing letters was it.
One letter I wrote Barb stands out in my mind.
The letter began, very touchingly, “Dear Sweetie.”

Problem was that I had spelled it “Dear S-W-E-A-T-Y.”
I’m not the world’s best speller to this day.

Not long after that, thoughts about joining the Oblates
began to flood my mind ... and heart.

That word vocation, so often in the past and even today,
is tied to sisters or priests.

Our baptism has made it clear that vocation
is much bigger, much deeper than that.

Baptism represents a call on God’s part.

It’s a call that each and every one of us join in God’s project
to renew that face of the Earth.

It’s nothing less than that – renewing the face of the Earth.

The remarkable thing is that “renewing the face of the Earth”
usually takes place in surprisingly small ways:

- like not laying on the horn when some jerk cuts in in front of you;
- like how friendly some people can be even in the craziness of the grocery store;
- like the person who always gets up early to start the coffee in the morning.

You may have heard me repeat a quote St. Francis de Sales,
the patron of my community:

“Be who you are and be that well . . . so that you may bring honor
to the Master Craftsman whose handiwork you are.”

St. Paul notes today that the call we have received
is meant to bring freedom.

That freedom is for serving “one another through love” he says.

On further, Paul warns, “If you bite and devour one another
beware that you are not consumed by one another.”

Today I think he might be talking about
all that divides us politically or religiously . . . or you name it.

If our call is to join in God’s project to renew the face of the Earth,
certainly the biting and devouring one another just won’t get us there.

So, here's a final quote that I've slightly adapted:

“When we are bold enough to respond to the vocation of our humanity,
which is the call to loving commitment
given to us by God and nurtured by Christ's Spirit,
we partake in the very life of our Creator.”

And I add, we partake in renewing the face of the Earth.

AMAZING isn't it!