

June 29 & 30, 2019  
Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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### The Road to Jerusalem

Today's theme could easily become a Steven Spielberg movie entitled "*The Road to Jerusalem*" with swelling music that would indicate a theme far more important than the yearly pilgrimage to the Holy City.

Luke's "journey narrative" is just that – a symbolic way – a literary device to combine all the times Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem. Luke is seeking to combine the journey of Jesus with our journeys in today's Gospel ~ in this "*Road to Jerusalem.*" For this, Jerusalem is more than a geographical place. Down through the centuries, Jerusalem has been both a physical place and a mythological symbol in the collective Jewish imagination.

In Medieval European ghettos or the faraway corners of Asian trade routes - the phrase "Next year in Jerusalem" spoken to one another wasn't about travel plans. They were expressing hope for the next year - For them there is a heavenly Jerusalem as well as an earthly Jerusalem... they believed Jerusalem had been lost because the people couldn't bring the ideals of the heavenly Jerusalem to the earthly Jerusalem.

Even the Jewish victims in the concentration camps would honor the phrase while they buried their brothers and sisters in mass graves - uttering the prayers of burial - in front of the guards standing over them....

This past April - Rabbi Katie Mizrahi wrote this prayer for the end of Passover:

"Next year in Jerusalem: May there be peace and justice for all who dwell there. May there be hope - May there be love - May there be freedom for Jews, for Muslims, for Christians, for people of all faiths.... May my small life in some real way - move the earthly Jerusalem closer to its heavenly potential."

Now, in today's Gospel Luke has given us the example of the non-acceptance of the Samaritans to this Jewish group and Jesus - the same kinds of non-acceptance there are in our world today. Then ~ the Samaritans and Jews still lived with the centuries old religious quarrel between them that is not unlike the divisions we face in our society today. Jews mostly avoided going through Samaritan territory by taking a longer route around them. But Jesus chose to go *into their territory* and *even seek hospitality*. He figured they would be rejected ~ principally because they were on the yearly pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem.

The rejection made the disciples angry - furious and even vengeful.... However, *Jesus' purpose was to offer a hand in friendship to the people the Jews considered enemies* and his response to the disciples' anger and their violent desire to act against them was "**NO!**" **NO to anger and revenge – NO TO VIOLENCE!** That was a major lesson of Jesus that Luke wanted all of us to learn in this Gospel.

The other lessons of Jesus follow in the Gospel: There were requests by those who were drawn to Jesus and wanted to follow him more closely. Their call is serious and so Jesus warns them – there is no outlined success plan... there are no guarantees for a safe future... He says: "I have nowhere to rest my head!" They need to face this.

For those who felt the call – and said – "just not now..." Jesus' response sounds blunt and harsh – their reasons might sound to us to be valid... but to compare their meaning in their culture to us in our culture - those reasons might sound like this: " Well, after I get my degree" - or "when the house is paid for" - or "When the kids are grown"...

But you know - the call to follow Jesus has nothing to do with packing a suitcase or going anywhere ~ The call to follow is an interior call that requires us to look honestly at ourselves...

What are our excuses for holding back when an urge to act or to react is stifled? What are our fears when the path forward suddenly shifts to unexpected changes... an unexpected loss - an unknown outcome?

The Road to Jerusalem is the journey within each of our lives and a journey we participate in...accepting and dealing with the "detours" of life - the "break-downs" along the way - the "delays" the "Missed connections"... we and others face...

Yet always, what each day offers is a new beginning on the journey - always facing in the desired direction - we start off - with a tired but determined desire to grow closer to the inner call...

This inner desire is a quiet, almost elusive sense of something more - something we are drawn to but not necessarily concrete. It actually is a *new way of seeing life!* When you feel and find yourself thinking: "There has got to be more to life than this.... There is!" That is a signal to you from the Presence of God deep within.

Each person is born with gifts.... gifts that make one's life interesting - fun - and gifts that can change the world for others. Think of teachers..... men and women who love teaching something to others and watch them awaken to this new knowledge...to a new experience, a new confidence. The teacher's passion is to pass on a love that can open up other's lives. Please Realize:

The gift that draws us is an *experience of the inner vision of God* - Everyone can become aware of a desire to reach out to others, and let it develop within them. In time, they become one with this passion and their drive gives birth to this passion of God in others. Think of Justice.... Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. grew in this passion for justice until he was one with it and it drove him to live out of it. He became Justice and died for it.

Sr. Dorothy Stang served the people of the Brazilian rainforest. Her passion was for the rights of these people to maintain their land against the unjust devastation of these lands for profit. When it became ugly - people wanted her to leave for her safety - but she would not leave them.

She would travel the muddy roads to meet with the people - to pray with them and to bolster their courage to stand up against injustice. In the end, at age 73, she was confronted and gunned down as she walked along, armed with her Bible on February 12, 2005. I'm kind of glad we aren't all called to such lengths, but their example does show us that ordinary men and women - even children - think of the Pakistani girl, Malala, ~ can lead us in knowing and feeling God's passion.

Jesus is calling us today to look at our desires - what draws us to follow more closely - is there a Word that symbolizes our passion? Which situations make us angry ? Which situations draw out sympathy - tenderness? What touches our hearts in a special way and draws us outward toward others? Compassion? Kindness? Equality? Fairness? Honesty? Justice? Peace? Poverty?

The Word lived out can produce so much good! It can come from very visible people or from someone at home who crochets or knits so others are warm...so newborns have little caps... It can be almost anything that touches you when you find your heart drawn to meet another's situation - or to pray for them. People who feel the pain of others and pray so sincerely - understand God's meaning of Love within them.

Whatever our passion is ~ it unites us to God so truly that *we become the passion....* Perfect people? No... but that becomes *the way we see life*. That becomes the basis of our thinking and our acting... every person can hold that within themselves and pour out that divine energy in their lives.

In a commentary by Sr. Barbara Reid on today's Readings, she says: "When Jesus tells us in today's Gospel that any who come with him will not be able to return to what was before - Jesus is telling us that if we follow that call within ourselves - we are changed and as we strive to live out that which we seek... We are changed forever - We cannot go back!"

Paul reminds us that this is not a yoke of slavery we take up, but a freeing power to live by the Spirit. Just as Elijah clothed Elisha with the mantle of his prophetic power, so anyone who accepts Jesus' invitation to become a disciple is wrapped in the protective cloak of the Spirit.

This is the *Road to Jerusalem....* the paths we travel in our personal lives - through our joys and sufferings - through our successes and failures - through our losses and deaths, we are opened to the vision of God - opened to the inner call that allows us to receive the grace and passion to reach out to others...because - now we understand...! We can say: *Next year in Jerusalem* - for we are opened to the hope that the vision of God will come about and that *we are part of that becoming....* The *Journey to Jerusalem* is one we share with the whole Body of Christ - to the transformed new life that is now aligned with God's Vision and leading us to realizing the true heavenly Jerusalem... that is *everywhere*. The questions for us today is to reflect on:

What is the Word drawing you? What part of God's Vision is yours to reveal?