

13. June 2020

“Elishas call”

1. Kgs 19,19-21

*Leaving there, he came on Elisha son of Shaphat as he was ploughing behind twelve yoke of oxen, he himself being with the twelfth. Elijah passed near to him and threw his cloak over him. Elisha left his oxen and ran after Elijah. 'Let me kiss my father and mother, then I will follow you,' he said. Elijah answered, 'Go, go back; for have I done anything to you?' Elisha turned away, took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He used the oxen's tackle for cooking the meat, which he gave the people to eat. He then rose and, following Elijah, became his servant.*

Elisha's vocation and his immediate response to it is reminiscent of the Lord's calling of the disciples, who left everything behind to follow Jesus! Here Elijah still allows his follower to say farewell to his family, but Jesus makes it even clearer how important such a vocation is, a vocation that henceforth only has to concern itself with the Kingdom of God:

*"Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Lk 9,62)*

*"No one who prefers father or mother to me is worthy of me. " (Mt 10,37).*

It is important to understand the dimension of such a vocation, as it was given to Elisha! It is not directed against the family and it relativises its importance in the natural order of life! The commandment to honour the father and mother is and remains, of course, the same!

But such a vocation belongs in the dimension of the supernatural order; it is a direct call to the service of God! In order to be totally free for him, the cultivation of natural bonds is withdrawn! Care for the good of the natural family is transformed into a universal concern for the concerns of the Kingdom of God!

When such a call is made to a person, it is a great proof of God's love, and we can assume that this call is always a blessing for the natural family, even if it is often not understood!

The celibacy of Catholic priests for example is to be understood in the context of the special call! Their life brings to mind the life of the Son of God who has not entered into a matrimonial bond! Here there are many aspects of such a life form to be considered, and so to better understand its value! In the context of today's reading, however, the character of the call that leads out of the otherwise dominant natural references of life must be considered in particular!

In the following of the Lord, it is necessary for every Christian to change his habits and thinking! As St. Paul teaches us, we should seek what is "above" (*cf. Col 3,2*)!

If this is already true for the Christian in the world, who naturally has to deal much more with the daily realities of life in the Spirit of Christ, it is especially true for those who have been called out and freed from some earthly burdens!

It would be paradoxical if, for the sake of Jesus, one were to leave the world and yet voluntarily engage in worldly things in a way that binds the heart!

People who have received the special call to follow Christ should carry the word of the prophet Elijah within them: "*Have I done anything to you?*", because the mantle of the prophet has been thrown over them too, because they have a special part in the prophetic vocation!

*"Have I done anything to you?"*

So it could go on to say: "Understand this call as a special call of love that calls you to the responsibility of responding to it! Therefore, bind yourself to me only so that I can send you, so that I can live in you, so that you can become a blessing for others!"