

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on the Second Sunday after Trinity
June 30, 2019

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After the Lord's Transfiguration Holy Scripture says, "He set His face to go to Jerusalem" where He would be "received up." We rightly think of the Cross. There was something new about Our Lord's *countenance*. We might say "he set his jaw." The Samaritan villagers noticed it. They knew nothing about the Transfiguration and little about Jesus, but they picked up on the change. St Luke says they made no attempt to welcome Jesus because they saw He was determined to press on.

The image is that the Lord was *on His way*. And on His way a large crowd of followers, and some hangers-on, accompanied Him. No doubt some of these offered to join the Lord's group, and others were invited by Jesus to do so. Today's Gospel mentions three of these men. If you have ever thought of yourself in 1st Century Palestine, with Jesus passing by, today's Gospel has something to say to you. How would you react?

One man had little idea of what Christian discipleship meant. Another was not available that day but could join up tomorrow or the next day. The last man had no scheduling conflicts but set his own conditions. This is a reminder each of us is already dealing with an assortment of priorities and values when we begin to get nudged by the Holy Ghost. As we go through life we are always in process of adjusting our obligations and values and goals. The decisions might begin with getting married and having children, then paying for their college, and finally down-sizing in retirement. And smack dab into that *commotion* comes the claim of Jesus Christ for our total obedience.

At the same time we are living with the commotion we have been, consciously or unconsciously, seeking that one central value that will never change while everything else is unstable or in perpetual flux. So here is the big question! Is there one value ever constant no matter how we look at life, or how our way of thinking may change? And Christ Jesus says, "*I am that central value and priority*. No matter how your life changes, the more you follow Me the more precious you will find Me to be as your guide and companion."

Our first lesson at Mass gives us the memorable incident of Elisha called by Elijah to be his assistant. Elisha didn't just leave off plowing in the field and give the

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ignition keys to a relative! He offered a sacrifice to the Lord. Elisha slew the oxen and roasted the meat on a fire built of the wood from the yoke. How about that for an example of *burning your bridges behind you*! And perhaps Jesus was thinking of Elisha when He made His reply to the lukewarm would-be disciple. After all, we do know our Lord's thoughts on the matter of decision-making. He rejoiced to see the poor widow cast all her living into the temple treasury. No hesitation there! Nor in Elisha! So this is the only acceptable attitude anyone can have who wishes to enter the Kingdom of God. Count the cost by all means. (The Lord said something about that in a memorable parable.) But God may be moving very fast by your life. You may have to grab on!

Saint Luke does not tell us what happened to the three men. But it looks like they were left behind. We know the disciples who made it all the way to Jerusalem faltered at the horror of the crucifixion. But after Easter and Pentecost they also became the nucleus of the Catholic Church against whom the gates of hell would not prevail. The Lord was seeking lion-hearted, not poor-spirited, followers for the path to glory. In *The Beatitudes* to be "poor in spirit" doesn't mean Caspar Milquetoast. Poor in spirit means to be *hungry for it*. So the three hopefuls were left behind dithering by the roadside while the Lord swept on towards Jerusalem.

At Philip Crotty's funeral Mass his cousin Tom Murray gave a reminiscence, remarking that, ever the teacher, Phil's answer to a question was often long and involved. But Tom remembered an exception. He once asked Phil if he ever doubted that Jesus Christ was his Lord and Saviour. And Dr. Crotty said *never!* Period!

When it comes time to go with God only fools dawdle! Those who have even an inkling of the unparalleled worth of the divine invitation make prompt sacrifices and follow Jesus Christ. In Him we have the central value against which everything else will be dropped, revised, or immeasurably enriched. We are never to hold back in our relationship to Christ. Why? Because it is the only transaction in all creation from which we will always come out the winner.