

by Joan Mitchell, CSJ

Spread out a map or set a small globe at the center of your group. Pray together.

LEADER: On every journey

ALL: Blessed are those we meet along the way.

LEADER: On every climb

ALL: Blessed are the views around the next bend.

LEADER: In every beginning

ALL: Blessed is the yearning to go farther, experience more.

LEADER: In every homecoming

ALL: Blessed are the memories that lead us into the future.

This Sunday Catholics and other Christian churches begin the liturgical season called Ordinary Time. This is the part of the liturgical year that is not the Advent/Christmas season or Lent/Eastertime.

The Church calls these Sundays ordinary not because they are unspectacular but because the weeks are numbered with ordinal numbers. For instance, this Sunday is the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time. The 2nd through 8th Sundays in Ordinary Time happened in January and February. Ordinary Time begins in June at a date

SUNDAY

by SUNDAY

adjusted for Easter, one of the 9th–13th Sundays.

During Ordinary Time Christians hear stories about Jesus' teaching and healing, his conversations with people he meets, his comparisons of God to ordinary activities in daily life like planting seeds. Each year in Ordinary Time we hear about Jesus' life from a different one of the three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

This year we read Luke's version of Jesus' good news. In Sunday's Gospel we catch up with Jesus and his followers

are they begin their journey to Jerusalem.

Journeys today are as likely to change and shape us as the journey with Jesus to Jerusalem changed and formed his disciples. People we meet, sights that stop us in our tracks, unexpected conversations live within us as continuing delights and sometimes compelling visions.

● **Where are you on your journey with Jesus? Who have been your companions?**



What do you see in this illustration? The ox is a symbol for Luke. His gospel begins with priest Zechariah in the Jerusalem temple, where Jews offered sacrifices. Oxen were one of the animals that could be sacrificed. The drawing illustrates two parables only Luke tells. In the center the father is welcoming his prodigal son home. At bottom right, the good Samaritan is helping a man left for dead.

GOSPEL

Jesus journeys to Jerusalem.

NARRATOR: As the days were being fulfilled for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. He sent messengers on ahead of him. On their way they entered a Samaritan town to prepare for his passing through, but the Samaritans would not welcome him because his face was set toward Jerusalem. His disciples James and John saw this.

JAMES AND JOHN: Jesus, do you want us to call down fire from heaven and destroy them?

NARRATOR: Jesus turned and rebuked James and John, and they went on to another town. As they were going along the road, someone spoke to Jesus.

PERSON 1: I will be your follower wherever you go.



JESUS: Foxes have lairs and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

NARRATOR: To a person along the way, Jesus said:

JESUS: Come after me.

PERSON 2: Let me bury my father first.

JESUS: Let the dead bury their dead; come away and proclaim the kingdom of God.

NARRATOR: Another person spoke to Jesus.

PERSON 3: I will follow you, Master, but first let me take leave of my people at home.

JESUS: No one who puts a hand to the plow and keeps looking back is fit for the reign of God.

Luke 9:51-62

gospel. Events on this journey repeat a pattern of fulfillment and rejection that Luke sees in Israel's history and wants us to see in Jesus' life.

Jesus' first sermon in Nazareth introduces the pattern when Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah and claims he is the one the Spirit has anointed to bring good news to the poor and inaugurate a year of God's favor. His hometown folks reject his claim.

Similarly, in Sunday's gospel, the people in the first town Jesus visits on his way reject him. These Samaritans reject Jesus because he is going to Jerusalem. They refuse to worship God in Jerusalem and refuse to associate with people who do.

● If Jesus came through your town this week, what do you think would be his message and how would your faith community welcome and accept him?

Jesus begins his exodus; his disciples begin their apprenticeship.

The journey Jesus is about to take is ultimately a journey from death to life that lifts Jesus to glory and promises his followers a path to life with God that lies farther on and deeper in than death. Luke catches us up in God's sweeping divine purpose and places Jesus' actions in their context within the whole history of Israel, the Church, the world.

A few verses before Jesus begins his journey to Jerusalem, his disciples see him talking with the prophets Moses and Elijah about the exodus he is about to accomplish in Jerusalem (9:28-36). Luke uses the word *exodus* to liken Jesus' upcoming journey to Israel's exodus from slavery in Egypt.

The journey theme unifies the next ten chapters of Luke's

Jesus' disciples serve an apprenticeship on this journey. They cannot expect that following Jesus will cost them less than Jesus' faithfulness to God costs him. The divine power Jesus reveals is for healing, forgiving, and setting people free.

Jesus promises his disciples no place to lay their heads. The Samaritans refuse to take Jesus' company in for a stay. The company is on the road

without homes and with none of the possessions that homes allow.

In Sunday's gospel two people ask to join Jesus' company as they walk along, and Jesus invites a third to follow him. The exchanges between Jesus and these three instruct us in the cost of discipleship.

The person Jesus invites to follow him wants first to bury his father. Jesus asks for a commitment that supersedes family obligations and goodbyes. A new community of faith is forming on this journey with ties stronger than blood.

Today following Jesus does not require leaving possessions, family, and friends. Christianity is an acceptable and established world religion. The Catholic Church requires baptism, weekly Eucharist, and yearly confession of serious sin of its members. Besides its required practices, it has organizations on the ground worldwide that work for justice and serve people in poverty.

Yet the Church as institution puts off many young people, who feel spiritual but uninterested in religion. Many would love to meet Jesus in person, follow him, and simply give themselves in service—



unencumbered by dogma and traditions, untainted by scandal.

Sunday's gospel insists that faith in Jesus is a relationship so basic it supersedes and underlies all others. It calls us to do better at evangelizing than James and John, who want to rain fire on those inhospitable to Jesus' message. Sunday's gospel calls us to embody the message in who we are and all we do.

● **How are being spiritual and being religious different? How does one affect the other?**

● **Imagine yourself on this journey with Jesus and his disciples. What do you talk about at the end of the day?**

Jesus and the men and women disciples who accompany him don't know what will unfold in Jerusalem. But the gospel writer knows

that Jesus was put to death and God raised him up. We today know that Jesus claims the faith of Christians worldwide. The journey that costs Jesus everything has become a pattern for the spiritual life of Christians.

For some, the cost of faith and mission is martyrdom: Peter and Paul in the AD 60s in Rome; Perpetua and Felicity, Carthage, AD 203;

the Jesuits of the University of San Salvador, their housekeeper, and her daughter, 1989; Sister Dorothy Stang, SND, 2005 in Brazil. The Christian journey can cost everything in many ways—lifelong parenting, paying workers rather than oneself when a company has slack times, treating cancer patients, walking with others through their losses.

In the Middle Ages Christians made pilgrimages to holy places to pray. People today still walk the Camino de Santiago, carrying a small treasure of their past lives in their backpacks and hoping to find new meaning. Hugeberc of Hildesheim writes about pilgrimage as "walking my spirit." "Feet first," she says, "and your spirit will follow."

The people that Jesus meets with parents to bury and friends to bid farewell introduce us to our yes-but-not-yet selves. Perhaps they do follow Jesus in time. The narrative leaves us wondering how these anonymous people will use their freedom and how we will use ours.

● **What is something spiritual you plan to do but not yet?**

DO SOMETHING

CHARITY **JUSTICE**

● **Take your spirit for a walk. Make a pilgrimage to a sacred place in your life—where you were born or lived as a child; the church where you were baptized, received First Communion, or were married; the cemetery where deceased family members are buried; your diocesan cathedral.**

What does our vocation ask?

Elijah, the prophet of God, lays his prophet's mantle, a distinctive camel-hair cloak, on Elisha in Sunday's first reading. He calls Elisha to a vocation that changes his life. Like the gospel, Sunday's first reading explores the change in relationships a prophetic vocation demands.

When Elisha begs Elijah's permission to kiss his father and mother goodbye, Elijah consents. However, in taking leave, Elisha does more than say goodbye.

By sacrificing all 24 oxen and turning his plowing equipment into fuel to cook a feast for his family and neighbors, Elisha shows he understands that his life is taking a completely new turn. No longer will he follow the plow and tend to his own affairs; from now on he will follow Elijah and become God's prophet himself.

The story from Kings asks us to assess what our Christian commitment asks of us. It is not a prescription to do exactly what Elisha did. Indeed, many troubled and searching people need encouragement these days not to hand over their money and their lives to telegenic false prophets and visionaries. Elisha's drastic and enthusiastic departure from his old and familiar life does suggest how radically we must reorient ourselves in order to follow God's call.

Elijah calls Elisha.

NARRATOR: God spoke to the prophet Elijah.

GOD: You shall anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah, as prophet to succeed you.

NARRATOR: Elijah set out and found Elisha, son of Shaphat, as he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen; he was following the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. Elisha left the oxen and ran after Elijah.

ELISHA: Please let me kiss my father and mother goodbye, and I will follow you.

ELIJAH: Go back. Have I done anything to you?

NARRATOR: Elisha returned, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them. Using the plowing equipment, he boiled their flesh and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah and became his servant.

1 Kings 19.16,19-21

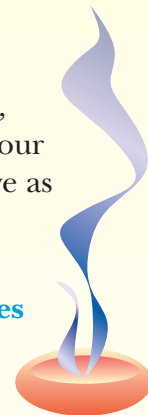
- What is a way in which you want to reorient your life?
- What can you do this week to be freer as a Christian to respond to the needs of people around you?

PRAY

Use the map or globe to locate the town or place where you felt called to a fuller commitment as a Christian. Describe what has happened because of this experience, where your journey has continued.

LEADER: Bless us, Creator God, in our going forth to live as Jesus lived.

ALL: Out of love we place ourselves at one another's service.



Joan Mitchell, CSJ, editor of Sunday by Sunday, holds a Masters in Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School and a Ph.D. in New Testament from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN.

2022: The Year of Luke

Beginning this Sunday, we read from Luke's Gospel every Sunday until Advent. This makes it a great time to become a student of Luke. His themes of justice for the poor, a voice for women, and second chances for everyone resonate with our own life experience.

Sister Joan's new book is ideal for the ordinary reader, for Bible study and faith-sharing groups, and for homilists. Its nine chapters and reflection questions bring out new meaning to the stories of the prodigal son and the good Samaritan and bring women from the edges into the center of the narrative.

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