

5. May 2021

**“God is our real home”**

*Lk 9:57-62*

*As they travelled along they met a man on the road who said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus answered, 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.' Another to whom he said, 'Follow me,' replied, 'Let me go and bury my father first.' But he answered, 'Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.' Another said, 'I will follow you, sir, but first let me go and say good - bye to my people at home.' Jesus said to him, 'Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'*

This text is chosen by the Church in Germany to commemorate St. Gotthard, Bishop of Hildesheim (\*940 †1039). Before he became a bishop, he lived as a Benedictine abbot in Neresheim.

The Lord's words set before us the unconditionality of following Christ. Jesus had no place on this earth, He did not build Himself a “nest” or live in a residence where He received those who wanted to visit Him. But this does not mean a restless “homelessness”, but His home was the will of the Father. This is the inner home that we can all receive from God as long as we live on this earth.

The outer home is temporary, sometimes also fragile, as one can experience often enough. Therefore, it is important to anchor ourselves in God, because this home cannot be lost to us when wars, adverse circumstances of many kinds threaten the earthly home.

In a special way, being completely at home in God applies to those people who have been called by the Lord to leave everything and follow Him. This also includes putting aside one's kinship for the sake of Jesus. Such a call of the Lord has something incomprehensible for many people, when people have their primary basis and meaning in their earthly home and in their family. But if someone follows a call that does not allow them to look back, then they must follow it even if it is not understood.

Such a call becomes comprehensible when we understand that it leads to direct service for God and for all people. The proclamation of the Gospel means offering

salvation to people and opening the way to the Eternal Home. It is a service to the true salvation of humanity. Everything is subordinated to this task. It therefore takes an ultimate freedom to respond fully to such a call, for the hand is laid on the plough of the Lord and the word of St. Paul applies: “... *forgetting all that lies behind me, and straining forward to what lies in front, I am racing towards the finishing-point to win the prize of God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus.*” (Phil 3:13b-14)

This ultimate freedom to follow the Lord completely is considerably limited if we do not free ourselves from natural attachments and these can even become a great obstacle. So it becomes understandable that the Lord does not allow any compromises here. Anyone who is not willing to fulfil all the conditions cannot respond to such a call to follow Christ. He looks back.

It is important to be clear about this, because the Lord will not change His mind here. However, if we accept such a call, then a wonderful and fruitful path opens up, which also leads to personal fulfilment.

I can only strongly advise every person to whom such a call is given to commit themselves completely to it. The One who has called, the Lord, will also give the grace to do so.

Parents should also be very alert to such a call for their child and support it even if it means that the son or daughter leaves the family. It is an honour for a family when a family member serves the Lord in this way. It is necessary to gain the sight of God to see what grace it is to be called by God.

It would be tragic if this dimension of God's call were lost or even diminished. A particularly strong and tasty salt would lose its taste and thus lose its power (*cf. Mt 5:13*).

We know the tradition in the Catholic Church of praying for Vocations so that the Lord will send labourers to do his harvesting (*cf. Lk 10:2*). Perhaps, with such an important prayer to God, we can add that vocations are also lived in the radicality that they are according to God's will, so that the Church can experience true renewal. Spiritual vocations that become entangled in worldly things, that look back and do not sufficiently detach themselves from their natural ties, fail in their task and cannot unfold all their fruitfulness.