

Homily for XIII th [A] Sunday (July 2- 2023) [\(2 Kgs 4:8-11, 14-16a; Rom 6:3-4, 8-11; Mt 10:37-42\)](#)

My dear Sisters and brothers in Christ;

Introduction: The common theme of today's readings is the witnessing mission given to Christ's followers to love God and our brothers and sisters through hospitality, generosity, commitment in humble service, and the practice of corporal and spiritual works (acts) of mercy (charity). The readings also remind us of the sacrifice demanded of Jesus' disciples and the suffering they will endure for their Faith when they bear witness to Jesus.

Homily starter anecdotes: (Biblical reason why preachers may use anecdotes in their homilies? *Mt 13: 34: "All this Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable"*). 1) **"Paid in full for one glass of milk."** The special joy of nature-loving boy Howard Kelly was hiking great distances and studying animals in the wild. On a walking trip, up through Northern Pennsylvania one spring, young Kelly stopped by a small farmhouse for a drink of cool spring water. A little girl answered his knock at the door, and instead of water, she brought him a glass of fresh milk. He thanked her profusely and went on his way. After years of medical studies, he became Dr. Kelly. Dr. Howard Kelly (1858-1943) was a distinguished physician who was one of the four founding doctors of Johns Hopkins, the first medical research university in the U.S. and, arguably, one of the finest hospitals anywhere. In 1895, he established in that school the department of Gynaecology and Obstetrics. Over the course of his career, Doctor Kelly advanced the sciences of gynaecology and surgery, both as a teacher and as a practitioner. Some years later, that same little girl from Northern Pennsylvania who had given him that glass of milk years ago, came to him for an operation. Just before she left for home, fearful of a huge bill, her bill was brought into the room and across its face was written in a bold hand, "Paid in full with one glass of milk." — That was Dr. Kelly's style of showing gratitude and hospitality. While he charged the rich patients substantial fees, he provided his services free-of-charge to the less fortunate. By his conservative estimate, in 75% of his cases he neither sought nor received a fee. Today's Scriptures challenge us to practice hospitality, seeing Christ in others. Adapted from <http://www.snopes.com/glurge/milk.asp>.

Scripture lessons: In our first reading, we see, the welcome given to the prophet Elisha by an elderly, childless couple who lived in Shunem. The wife recognized the holiness of Elisha. She showed him reverence and hospitality by inviting him to dine with her and her husband and by arranging an upper room of their house

so that Elisha might stay with them when he visited the area. In response, Elisha promised her, *“This time next year you will be fondling a baby son.”* The promise was fulfilled by God. Today’s Responsorial Psalm (Ps 89), reminds us that we are the children of God who tells us, *“My mercy [kindness] is established forever.”* The second reading, taken from Paul’s letter to the Romans, explains why those who care for the followers of Jesus are caring for Jesus himself, and those who show hospitality to any one of them are eligible for a reward. By our Baptism, we have been baptized into Jesus’ death and buried with him, and we look forward to our resurrection with him (Rom 6:5). Since Baptism is our entrée into this new life, it makes us part of the Body of Christ, and Christ is truly present in us. That is why the one who welcomes us welcomes Christ and becomes eligible for a reward. Today’s Gospel lesson concludes Jesus’ great “missionary discourse” in which he instructs the twelve apostles on the cost and the reward of the commitment required of a disciple. The first half of these sayings of Jesus details the behaviour expected of his disciples, and the second half speaks of the behaviour expected of others towards the disciples. Jesus assures his disciples that whoever shows them hospitality will be blessed. Those who receive Jesus receive the One who sent him. Also, those who help the “little ones,” (believers) and the poor, the sick, and the needy will be amply rewarded.

Important messages for our reflection and prayer: 1) **We need to be hospitable and generous:** Hospitality means acknowledging the presence of God in others and serving Him in them, especially those in whom we least expect to find Him. We, as individuals and as a community, are to look for opportunities to be hospitable—and, of course, there are plenty of ways of offering hospitality. May be hospitality is offered through a kind word to a stranger – or even a smile. A kind smile or a “hello” to someone waiting with us in a grocery line may be the only kindness that person encounters all day. 2) **We become fully alive as Christians through the generous giving of ourselves.** What is more important than the sending of checks for charitable causes is the giving of ourselves to people, primarily in the way we think about them, for from that spring will flow the ways we speak to them and about them, forgive their failings, encourage them, show them respect, console them, and offer them help. Such generosity reflects warmth radiating from the very love of God.

JOKE OF THE WEEK: 1) **Funny truths:** You may sleep in the Church, but don’t snore. William Muehl, professor of preaching at Yale Divinity, spoke the following famous words to generations of seminarians: “Always remember that most of the people you have on a Sunday morning almost decided not to come, to stay in bed and sleep instead.” Hence, it is no wonder that a recent study in Great Britain found that 42 percent of regular Churchgoers fall asleep in Church. Ever

feel like yawning in Church yourself? This'll wake you up: "Yawning is of medical importance because it is symptomatic of pathology such as brain lesions and tumours, haemorrhage, motion sickness, chorea and encephalitis." So says a 1987 University of Maryland report in the journal "Behavioural and Neural Biology." So, while you're yawning, be sure to tell yourself: "Don't worry. There's only a small chance it's a tumour."

2) Overdose hospitality: A **farmer**, who went to a big city to see the sights, asked the hotel's clerk about the time of meals. "Breakfast is served from 7 to 11, dinner from 12 to 3, and supper from 6 to 8," explained the clerk. "Look here," inquired the farmer in surprise, "when am I going to get time to see the city?"

Additional anecdotes:

01) "You one day gave a coin to Baron de Rothschild in the studio." Baron De Rothschild was one of the richest men who ever lived. Legend has it that the Baron once posed before an artist as a beggar. While the artist, Ary Scheffer, was painting him, the financier sat before him in rags and tatters holding a tin cup. A friend of the artist entered, and the baron was so well-disguised that he was not recognized. Thinking he was really a beggar, the visitor dropped a coin into the cup. Ten years later, the man who gave the coin to Rothschild received a letter containing a bank order for 10,000 francs and the following message: "You one day gave a coin to Baron de Rothschild in the studio of Ary Scheffer. He has invested it and today sends you the capital which you entrusted to him, together with the compounded interest. A good action always brings good fortune. Signed, Baron de Rothschild." [*Bits and Pieces* (February 4, 1993), p. 24.) — A simple act of kindness was bountifully rewarded. Now hear the words of our Lord: "And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward." Even a cup of cold water, says the Master, water given to one of His little ones, will be rewarded.

02) Pastoral ministry is a tough occupation: Did you hear about the farm boy who always wondered what would happen if he twisted the tail on the mule? One day he tried it. And now they say about him, he's not as pretty as he used to be, but he's a whole lot wiser! Ministry is not for cowards, the lazy, the easily discouraged, the thin-skinned, or those without endurance. It is a tough occupation! And it's getting tougher! I love the cartoon that shows a man saying, "I don't get America's fascination with the television show *Survivor*. I've occupied an island of strenuous and dangerous activities with hostile cohorts with a chance of getting voted out. I've been a pastor for thirty years!" — Today's

Gospel lesson gives us Jesus' final words of instruction to his disciples, as he commissions them to undertake their mission and continues instructing them about their purpose. The text also urges us to see that our ministers get rest. Jesus talks about giving our prophets a break, time off for a cup of cool water. Let's face it; a minister's job is never done. There is always another sermon to write, a book to read, prayers to pray, a person to meet, a wrong to right, a meeting to attend. Even the pace of ministry is accelerating, thanks to e-mail, faxes, and cell phones. And a pastor, to survive, must learn to work under a load of unfinished work. Why, today's pastor is like a man juggling a dozen balls well! The people of his congregation keep tossing him more balls until he's up to 64! Then he drops them all and people walk away, shaking their heads in disbelief.

03) Shrinking and growing angel: The Russian author Leo Tolstoy once wrote a story about a shoemaker who was making his way home one night when he found a poor man shivering and poorly clad. Moved by pity, the shoemaker took the man home. His wife was not pleased. She complained about the cost of feeding another mouth. As she continued to complain, the stranger grew smaller and smaller, shriveled and wrinkled with every unkind word. But when she spoke kindly to the stranger and gave him food, he grew and became more beautiful. The reason was that the stranger was an angel from Heaven in human form and could live only in an atmosphere of kindness and love. [Fulton J. Sheen, *The Power of Love* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964).] — The writer of Hebrews tells us that we are to be hospitable to “strangers for thereby, some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb 13:2).

04)“Oh, no!” Satan answered. “That’s my tool to wreck the Church.” There is an old legend about Satan one day having a yard sale. He thought he'd get rid of some of his old tools that were cluttering up the place. So there were gossip, slander, adultery, lying, greed, power-hunger, and more laid out on the tables. Interested buyers were crowding the tables, curious, handling the goods. One customer, however, strolled way back in the garage and found on a shelf a well-oiled and cared-for tool. He brought it out to Satan and inquired if it was for sale. “Oh, no!” Satan answered. “That’s my tool. Without it I couldn’t wreck the Church! It’s my secret weapon!” “But what is it?” the customer inquired. “It’s the tool of discouragement,” the devil said. — Indeed! In today’s Gospel text, Jesus is talking to the Church members about their attitude and deportment toward the prophets God sends among us as shepherds. He speaks frankly about acceptance and rejection, about kindness and trust. In short, he promises that in the minister’s success among us shall come our own reward as well as his.