

Gratitude and Urgency Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time Monday, June 30, 2014
8:15 AM **Am 2:6-19, 13-16;** Mt 8:18-22 (First Martyrs of the Church of Rome) (Most people don't want to get that committed to what is really spiritual: a total dependence upon God.)

“But Jesus answered him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.’”

Today's two readings fit together. Amos the prophet is really full of a certain kind of indignation because of the total ingratitude of the people. The sins of the people are nothing other than the result of ingratitude. Grateful hearts do what is right. Grateful hearts are generous. Grateful hearts are merciful. Grateful hearts actually are even disciplined. Gratitude is a powerful motivation for what is right, what is good. **Ingratitude brings all the opposites: selfishness, self-indulgence, disrespect, lack of discipline, and so on. So the key is gratitude.**

Now in **Jesus'** case, he has come with a very urgent message. He is a man of great gratitude, and his whole life is of service, of mercy. It is a very disciplined life, focused. All of this **consistent with gratitude, but he adds an urgency. He calls people to follow him.**

And here is a man so typical of human beings: “Absolutely, I will follow you, but not right now”—not right now. “Let me bury my father.” Now some scholars say that his father wasn't even dead yet. It was a way of saying, well, when my father passes away and I no longer have responsibilities toward him, then I will be your disciple. And Jesus, quite contrary to all that was considered appropriate at that time, quite contrary to the cultural values of that time, said no, forget your father; forget your family business; follow me. He pulled sons away from all the fathers of the apostles. This did not endear him to them, I am sure. This was breaking, you might say, the fundamental code of that particular culture, that patriarchal culture where son always followed father in a particular occupation or business. So in this way **Jesus was not only grateful to God the Father, but also urging the urgent business of breaking away from the humdrum, everyday world of economic activity.**

Now this is a little scary. Most people don't want to do this. **Most people don't want to get that committed to what is really spiritual: a total dependence upon God.** But that's exactly what this is about. And from Jesus' viewpoint, **those who really don't care about this spiritual world are dead already.** “And let the dead bury their dead.”