

Father Henri Nouwen was a famous priest, author, teacher and pastor; who wrote over 40 books on the spiritual life. He is also known for his work with one of Jean Vanier's *L'Arch* community in Toronto; where he worked with the developmentally disabled as pastor and care-giver.

In his 2006 book titled, *Here and Now: Living in the Spirit*, Nouwen says:

*To live in the present, we must believe deeply that what is most important is the here and the now. We are constantly distracted by things that have happened in the past or that might happen in the future. It is not easy to remain focused on the present. Our mind is hard to master and keeps pulling us away from the moment.*

And, indeed, Venerable Servant of God, Archbishop Fulton Sheen has said:

*All our anxieties relate to time.*

In today's readings, we hear the call of Elisha the prophet. When he is called by God through his teacher Elijah, Elisha is caught up in his day-to-day work. He is torn between two worlds - the natural and the supernatural. And after a bit of last-minute arrangements which pretty much burn all bridges to his past, Elisha goes with Elijah.

In the Gospel, we hear the continuation of last week's story. In passing through certain regions, the disciples and Jesus are unwelcome. Moving along, Jesus is met with what could be called "fans" or "groupies;" who want to follow Him - but ...

There is always a "but."

Something in our past - some event or some baggage that holds us up.

Something in our future - a hope or a desire that we want to hold out for.

But Jesus is ... right here ... right now ... if only we would notice Him in this present moment.

In a sense, we need to examine our own relationship with Jesus, and look for any of the obstacles ... the “buts” ... that keep us from a deeper relationship with Christ and with God ... the “buts” that hold us back from discipleship, and leave us as mere “fans” and “groupies” of Jesus.

Because discipleship, as St. Paul tells us in the Second Reading ... discipleship calls us to freedom ... and we must “*stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.*”

The solution is, as Paul says, to “*live by the Spirit;*” or in a word: prayer.

Nouwen further states that:

*Prayer is the discipline of the moment. When we pray, we enter into the presence of God whose name is God-with-us. To pray is to listen attentively to the One who addresses us here and now. When we dare to trust that we are never alone but that God is always with us, always cares for us, and always speaks to us, then we can gradually detach ourselves from the voices that make us guilty or anxious and thus allow ourselves to dwell in the present moment.*

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us lay aside any encumbrances that might be keeping us from a deeper relationship with Him and with God. Let us reach out and take hold of the grace of the present moment ... and hear the voice of Jesus calling each one of us ... “Follow me.”

And with no obstacles ... no excuses ... no “ifs” “ands” or “buts” ... let us re-commit ourselves fully to Christ ... in this moment ... and always ... today, tomorrow ... and forever.