



# LIVING THE GOSPEL

**Third Sunday in Ordinary Time  
January 21, 2024**

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**Theme: "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."**

## **Gathering Prayer**

**All:** Almighty ever-living God, direct our actions according to your good pleasure, that in the name of your beloved Son we may abound in good works. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## **Exploring the Word**

### **Gospel Reading: Mark 1:14-20**

<sup>14</sup>After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. <sup>15</sup>"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" <sup>16</sup>As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." <sup>18</sup>At once they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup>When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. <sup>20</sup>Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

### **Gospel Focus**

Last week's gospel gave us John's depiction of Simon and Andrew's calling; here we have the same as depicted by Mark. Here the brothers are together rather than God calling them one by one, and since John is imprisoned, he is not involved in pointing the way. The stories seem contradictory and cannot both be factually true, but their different emphasis help to reveal more of the ever-unfolding truth about Jesus and what it means to follow him. In this story, the apostles-to-be are called when they are in the midst of their daily work. Jesus interrupts them, and rather than ignoring him and pressing on with their work, they stopped. Something about him compels them to accept this disruption to their daily lives. They respond with extraordinary trust to something that could have been received as mere inconvenience, and they encounter God there.

### **Gospel Reflection**

"Give me chastity, but not yet." This famous prayer of St Augustine well captures the reluctance that most of us have to changing our ways. Yet we hear the exact opposite when the

Ninevites instantly repent at Jonah's preaching and the fishermen immediately leave their nets to follow Jesus. There is an urgency with regard to time, and a totality of response is needed. In Ordinary Time in the liturgical year, it may seem more natural to settle into the ordinary ways in which we have been living out our discipleship. Instead, these Scriptures urge us to recognize that a new time presses upon us, requiring responses different from before. There is nothing ordinary about the invitation to follow Jesus more radically in this urgent time.

Paul, thinking the Parousia was right over the horizon, insists that the time is running out and that our usual way of doing things will no longer serve. Similarly, Jonah prophesizes to Nineveh that their destruction is imminent. When we think the end is near, we lose sense of inertia toward change. Today we hear this kind of urgency from those who study climate change or the causes of food shortages, war, and epidemics. To turn around these global ills requires profound turning around of our patterns of living. Still, we find ourselves reluctant, praying with Augustine, "yes, but not yet."

In Mark, the response of the fishermen is instant. These android fishermen immediately accept Jesus' invitation to use their skills "to fish for people." Abandoning their nets is a way of speaking of what must be left behind when one embraces radical discipleship. The fishermen do not leave their families, as the next episodes in the gospel shows. Rather, Jesus becomes part of their family, making Capernaum his home (Mk 2:1), and the disciples become Jesus' new family, reorienting all relationships.

There are also many women, including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, Salome, and many others, who become part of Jesus' family of disciples. While the evangelists do not preserve the story of their call, all agree that these women had been following Jesus and ministering with him when he was in Galilee and continued to do so all the way to the cross (Mk 15:40). The cost of such a radical response to Jesus is already in view when Mark prefaces the call of the first disciples with the notice that John had been arrested. But like impulsive lovers who commit themselves to one another while still wrapped in their initial infatuation with each other, it is compelling love that causes disciples to follow Jesus instantly. Just as a couple grows into love and learns the costly self-surrender it takes to make that love continue to flourish, so too disciples learn the deeper conversion demanded as they grow in their radical love affair with the Holy One. It is then not so much the threat of destruction that moves to convert our ways but an irresistible love that turns our hearts.

## **Old/New Testament and CCC links**

### **First Reading — Jonah 3:1-5, 10**

<sup>1</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: <sup>2</sup> "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." <sup>3</sup> Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days. <sup>4</sup> On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." <sup>5</sup> The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

### **Responsorial Psalm — Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9**

***R: Teach me your ways, O Lord.***

Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths,  
guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior. **(R)**

Remember that your compassion, O Lord, and your love are from of old.  
In your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O Lord. **(R)**

Good and upright is the Lord; thus he shows sinners the way.  
He guides the humble to justice and teaches the humble his way. **(R)**

## **Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 7:29-31**

<sup>29</sup>What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; <sup>30</sup>those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; <sup>31</sup>those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

## **Catechism of The Catholic Church**

**541.** "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe in the gospel.'"(Mk 1:14-15) "To carry out the will of the Father Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth."(LG 3) Now the Father's will is "to raise up men to share in his own divine life".(LG 2) He does this by gathering men around his Son Jesus Christ. This gathering is the Church, "on earth the seed and beginning of that kingdoms".(LG 5)

**787.** From the beginning, Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to them, and gave them a share in his mission, joy, and sufferings.(Cf. Mk 1:16-20; 3:13-19; Mt 13:10-17; Lk 10:17-20; 22:28-30) Jesus spoke of a still more intimate communion between him and those who would follow him: "Abide in me, and I in you. . . . I am the vine, you are the branches."(Jn 15:4-5) And he proclaimed a mysterious and real communion between his own body and ours: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."(Jn 6:56)

**1423.** It is called the *sacrament of conversion* because it makes sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father(Cf. Mk 1:15; Lk 15:18) from whom one has strayed by sin.

It is called the *sacrament of Penance*, since it consecrates the Christian sinner's personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction.

**1427.** Jesus calls to conversion. This call is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."(Mk 1:15) In the Church's preaching this call is addressed first to those who do not yet know Christ and his Gospel. Also, Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism(Cf. Acts 2:38) that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life.

**2612.** In Jesus "the Kingdom of God is at hand."(Mk 1:15) He calls his hearers to conversion and faith, but also to *watchfulness*. In prayer the disciple keeps watch, attentive to Him Who Is and Him Who Comes, in memory of his first coming in the lowliness of the flesh, and in the hope of his second coming in glory.(Cf. Mk 13; Lk 21:34-36) In communion with their Master, the disciples' prayer is a battle; only by keeping watch in prayer can one avoid falling into temptation.(Cf. Lk 22:40, 46)

## **Sharing and Discussion**

1. What, if any, is the correlation between “repent and believe” and “follow me?”
2. What would compel a person to “follow Jesus” as definitively as his disciples? Is trusting in him an important factor?
3. What are the “nets” in your life which God is calling you to abandon to follow him?

## **Closing Prayer**

**All:** Almighty and ever-living God, we thank you for nourishing us in word and sacrament. In you all things are possible. Hear our prayers that the world might come to know the hope of Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All: Amen**

**Living The Gospel bible study/sharing via Zoom.  
Every Wednesday  
Time: 8 – 9.30 pm**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2760073734?pwd=cDRZR2JQMGRobVkwY3ZVF5L1BwZz09>**

**Meeting ID: 276 007 3734  
Passcode: 1WordOfGod**

**All are welcome!**

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### **References:**

- (1) Gospel Notes are taken from The Navarre Bible
- (2) Gospel Reflection and Living Liturgy are taken from “Living Liturgy for Sundays and Solemnities” by Order of St Benedict. Published by Liturgical Ministry, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota  
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- (3) CCC references are taken from Catechism of The Catholic Church