

## Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 21, 2024



### REFLECTION

What was the first word you ever spoke? We often assign importance to our first words.

In the Gospel passage we read today, we hear the first words Jesus speaks in Mark's account of the Gospel. Jesus says that the kingdom of God is present, and that everyone should repent and believe in the Good News. With these words, Jesus sets the agenda of his earthly ministry. Every word he will speak and every miracle he does furthers this mission. Jesus is telling us that we do not have to wait until we die to experience his kingdom. We can experience the kingdom in some way today!

Think about the world today . . . does this feel like heaven? Probably not. The people in Jesus' time also had a hard time believing that. This is because our world, though fundamentally good, is marred by sin. That sin stops us from seeing Jesus' vision of reality. So how do we enter this kingdom? How do we experience heaven on earth? It begins by repentance and conversion. That means turning away from our wrongdoing. The root of the word "conversion" means to go in another direction. If we are walking on the path of sin, we must repent of our sins and physically and spiritually turn our bodies, minds, and hearts to another direction, to Jesus.

The last part of his message is to believe. This isn't just about believing we can be better. Jesus is inviting us to trust in him. He is someone worth believing in. Repent and believe and experience the kingdom.

### ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What do you need to repent of today? What actions and choices need change?
- ❖ Where can you see glimpses of God's kingdom today?



### ACTION

During your personal prayer time, take some time to reflect on the Jesus Prayer. The Jesus Prayer is a very famous prayer that is easy to memorize. Simply say, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."



Check out this short video about the Jesus Prayer. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Qvsg-R4WMU>





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## THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### LECTIONARY #68B

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Mark 1:14-20

### Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

Today's Gospel is once again similar to the previous week's. In this case, we are hearing Mark's account of the calling of the first disciples, as opposed to John the Evangelist's account we heard last Sunday. In today's reading, we still hear of Andrew and Simon being called, but we also get James and John, the sons of Zebedee. We learn that all four are fishermen, and that Jesus approaches them and invites them to follow him to become "fishers of men." The fact that they were all fishermen is worth paying attention to. On the one hand, we might point out that they all came from a life that would seem completely unsuited to proclaiming the Good News to the world. On the other hand, it would seem that it gave them plenty of background for their ministry.

**Q FOCUS:** *Jesus can use any of our gifts to help him spread the Good News.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week, we celebrate the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle on January 25. It is interesting to reflect on today's Gospel reading in which the first disciples are called (Peter, Andrew, James, and John), and then a few days later reflect on Paul's call to discipleship (see Acts 9). Paul began as a zealot, hunting down and persecuting early Christians before his conversion. Yet, his encounter with the presence of Christ (Jesus had already ascended to heaven when Paul's conversion to faith occurs) transforms his life, much

like those first disciples. After he comes to the faith, Paul lives his life for the Gospel, going so far as to give up his life for the sake of Jesus' name. Paul's writings still today give witness to the Good News and invite others to conversion.

### Church Teaching Connection

"Goodness always tends to spread. Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us, and any person who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others. As it expands, goodness takes root and develops. If we wish to lead a dignified and fulfilling life, we have to reach out to others and seek their good" (*Evangelii gaudium*, 9).

### Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel

Mark 1:14-20

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then



they abandoned their nets and followed him. He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets. Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

The calling of the first disciples is different in every Gospel account. Last week, in John's account, we noted that some of these early followers had been disciples of John the Baptist, and they then chose to follow Jesus. The account we hear today from Mark has a slightly different timeline, as it begins with John the Baptist already being imprisoned before Jesus calls Andrew, Simon, James, and John from their fishing.

When we encounter these little discrepancies in the Gospels, it is important not to fall into a belief that they are just stories. The Catholic Church teaches that all the books of the Bible are divinely inspired; we are not meant to read the Gospels as strictly historical biographies.

► Are there other differences between last week's Gospel and this week's that stand out to you? Any similarities?

Focusing on our reading today, we see that these first followers Jesus called were all fishermen. Not only would they be disciples, but these four would all become part of the twelve apostles, leaders of the early Church and some of Jesus' closest companions.

► What qualities of a fisherman might help them in their role as apostles?

At first, we might not think that fishing, a job focused mostly on manual labor, would be great preparation for spreading the Good News. Yet, God can use all of us in all of our activities and jobs for his glory. For example, these men were a visible part of the community; they worked in a family business, they had hired workers. Maybe because of their act of faith in following Jesus, others came to believe. The first disciples did not follow Christ out of desperation, because they were poor, or wanted to get out of bad situation. Rather they believed in Jesus' words and desired more. And finally, as fishermen, they would have had experience with and understood the importance of being patient and persistent. These qualities would have been helpful as they worked to build up the early Church after Jesus' resurrection. God can also use our gifts and talents to help in the Church's mission of building the kingdom.

## Wrapping It Up

*Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 120.*

The differences in Gospel accounts reveal more of Jesus' saving mystery to us.

In Mark's Gospel, the first disciples were fishermen.

God can make use of all our skills and experiences to build his kingdom.



# Act on the Word

## Called to Use Our Gifts

*For this activity, you will need journals or paper and pens.*

Invite the teens to find a comfortable place and posture where they can reflect and write. The purpose of this exercise is to have them think about their gifts and calling in new ways. Once they have settled in and are ready to write, use the following prompts to guide them in this reflection.

Remind the young people that we just heard about the fact that Jesus called disciples who weren't obviously suitable to help him preach and minister. And yet on closer inspection we saw how their profession would help prepare them for their calling to follow Christ. Invite them now to look at their own gifts. Ask them, "What is the one gift or talent you are most proud of, or the one thing that you most enjoy doing? Maybe it's playing a sport or musical instrument, or creative writing, or drawing. Maybe it's an academic subject that you're particularly strong in. Maybe it's just your sense of humor or being a great friend. What are you most proud of?"

Then ask, "Thinking about that primary gift you just named, what are the strengths or obvious features of that gift? In general, what does it help you to do?" Give the teens some time to journal their thoughts. Then ask, "How does this gift help you to grow in ways that we might not see as easily? Does it help you with physical tasks, or to think differently, or does it help you interact with other people differently?"

Finally, after giving the young people time to reflect, turn to their futures. Ask them, "What do you want to do with your life? How can these gifts, both in obvious ways and those that are less so, help you in pursuing that vocation? How might your calling help you to serve God and the world? What are some ways you can use these gifts for the betterment of all?"

If anyone would like to share any insights from this reflection, they can do so at the end of the activity.

## Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus,  
we often become entangled in our nets,  
hesitating to heed your call in our lives.  
Help us, like the apostles,  
to respond to you with ready hearts and  
joyful zeal.*

*Who live and reign with the Father in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit,*

*God, for ever and ever.*

*Amen.*

## For Next Sunday

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*