

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Following Jesus

January 26, 2020

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Baptist, mentioned at the beginning of this Gospel passage today, was a transforming moment for Jesus.

Before that time, Jesus had just begun gathering his Apostles and preaching about the love of God, but He had only just begun. He wasn't fully immersed in His Ministry yet.

As long as John the Baptist continued preaching and baptizing, Jesus stayed in the wings.

But then when John was arrested, that was the sign for Jesus to "increase" as John the Baptist was to "decrease".

The last Old testament prophet, John the Baptist had been put to death, and the moment had come for Jesus, the Messiah for whom all the prophets had announced, was now to come into the world even more fully to preach the Good News!

St Matthew tells us that when that moment came, Jesus moved to Capernaum, a more cosmopolitan city than his own small hometown of Nazareth.

That is when He began to call his first Apostles together.

Peter, Andrew, James, and John had all met Jesus before, when they were still disciples of John the Baptist.

They had spent time with Jesus.

They had seen him perform the miracle at Cana, that of turning water into wine at the wedding feast.

They had started to get to know him - the Gospel of John tells us that they had even come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

But that was not enough for Jesus. Jesus has even more to show them, and He had more for them to do.

So at this crucial moment, when Jesus was ready to become fully immersed in His ministry, He goes out to these fishermen as they work their trade on the Sea of Galilee. He calls them by name, and invites them to help build his Kingdom.

Jesus didn't start his mission alone; He chose the Apostles to help Him.

Jesus established his Church and began His work of salvation with the help of these chosen apostles, and today he continues his work in the same way, calling normal fishermen, normal people like you and me, to become His apostles; to spread the Good News to those around us.

It is interesting to notice exactly how Jesus offers this invitation.

The Apostles are on the lake, fishing - in the middle of their work, in the middle of their busy lives-trying to make a living to support their families.

Jesus comes to meet them there. He walks out to the lakeshore.

He enters into their environment.

He walks into their everyday lives.

Up until this point, his only contact with them had been in extraordinary circumstances - festive gatherings and wedding parties.

But now he comes right into the middle of their busy lives.

He could have dropped by their houses after work.

He could have spoken to them after Saturday worship services in the synagogue, or even in the marketplace somewhere.

He could have met them in town on one of their days off.

That would have been much easier on them - less of an interruption, less of an inconvenience; less of an obtrusion in their lives!

But He doesn't.

Jesus wants to be part of their lives. A big part of their lives! He doesn't want to be on the fringe - he wants to be fully involved in their lives. And our lives! Not just on Sundays-for an hour!! Jesus deals with us the same way. He is calling us into His Ministry!

He is always coming out to meet us, coming into our lives.

He is always thinking of us, watching over us, taking care of us, and calling out to us through the Church and through our conscience - regardless of convenience.

He has given us "free choice" to follow Him; or not! He wants us to follow him more closely today than yesterday, and even more passionately tomorrow than today! We just need to listen, to pay attention, and when necessary, to leave behind our nets, our relationships, our desires,- anything that hinders us from hearing and heeding His call!

How happy and thrilled Jesus must have been when he saw these fishermen, who had everything to lose, put it all on the line for him!

How it must have thrilled his heart to find friends and followers who were willing to trust him completely with their lives! Jesus doesn't work alone. He calls us to work with him.

We respond to that call by following his commandments and obeying His teachings; the teachings of HIS Church.

We respond by keeping our prayer life in shape and embracing the Sacraments, those God given Graces' into our lives.

We respond by looking for opportunities to draw others closer to Christ through our courageous but respectful words and through

our tireless example of humility, faith, and selfless concern for our neighbor.

We respond by listening to the small inspirations that the Holy Spirit sends us each day - inspirations that almost always lead us out of our comfort zones for the sake of our neighbor.

Jesus calls, and we must respond. We must leave behind the boats that we love and the nets that we depend on and depend on Jesus!

It may well be a sacrifice on our part! It is not always easy to respond to Christ's call.

Life is already difficult. When Jesus asks more of us, our first reaction is usually to hesitate, or even to rebel. I did. Remember in my last homily-my famous last words- "I'll never become Catholic!" We must trust in Jesus, who always wants what is best for us!

That's when we have to remember why Jesus keeps calling us.

It's because he loves us. He loves us so much that He died on the Cross for us, to demonstrate His great love for us.

He wants us to be with him always.

He knows that only He can fill our hearts with the meaning and purpose we yearn for. As St Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in God"!

Jesus does not call us for selfish reasons. He calls us to "give us life to the full!" He calls us for our sake, and when we respond, he always stays right there beside us.

He reminds us of this today during Mass. It's only because he has called us to be his followers that we will have this remarkable opportunity to receive God Himself in the Eucharist!

So, let's thank God for not giving up on us, let's thank him for continuing to call us. – And let's promise Him that this week we will "drop our nets and follow after Him".

