Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
January 21, 2024

The Fish That Didn't Get Away

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

We have all heard stories about the extraordinary fish that got away. We might even have such a story of our own. Two of today's readings are fish stories, but with a slight twist. They are also "call narratives." Last week we reflected on the call to listen and to follow; this week it is a call to go out to bring God's mercy to others. This is a call to "catch" others, as one might catch fish—a metaphor that would have delighted fisher people.

In the beginning of the Jonah story, the prophet did not catch fish; one caught him. Later, the word he preached was very successful, his own spitefulness notwithstanding. The Ninevites were the sworn enemies of the Israelites, and Jonah did not want them to repent, but to be punished by God. Nevertheless, God's mercy was stronger than Jonah's spite. In the Gospel, Jesus calls his followers to set down their fishing nets and to launch into a life of catching people with the word of God. There is an eagerness here that is absent in the Jonah story. Furthermore, the disciples left their primary commitment—their patriarchal family—to accept Jesus' invitation.

As Pope Francis declared, we are all missionary disciples. Are we eager to respond, as were Jesus' disciples? Or do we think we should attend only to those whom we judge to be deserving? If so, have we forgotten that no one deserves God's mercy? It is a free gift to all. ✝

Jesus calls his followers to launch into a life of catching people with the word of God.

Sunday Readings

Jonah 3:1–5, 10

The people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.

1 Corinthians 7:29–31

I tell you, brothers, the time is running out…. For the world in its present form is passing away.

Mark 1:14–20

Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they abandoned their nets and followed him. [Jesus said,] "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas (which is translated Peter)."

A Word from Pope Francis

Let us not ignore God's word. It is a love letter, written to us by the One who knows us best. In reading it, we again hear his voice, see his face, and receive his Spirit. That word brings us close to God. Let us…carry it with us always, in our pocket, on our phone.

HOMILY, ST. PETER'S BASILICA, JANUARY 24, 2021

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Does the way you live witness to a merciful, loving God?
- Is there some change you should make?

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Living Our Faith

Hosffman Ospino

There is not one exclusive way of living our relationship with Jesus Christ in the everyday. For some, the ideal model is that of monastic life in which men and women dedicate their lives to prayer and contemplation in a monastery, away from any distraction. For others, the ideal model is that of missionary life, bringing the message of the Gospel to distant lands in the midst of many challenges. Both models are attractive, and both continue to be sources of life for Christian communities around the world.

However, only a relatively small group of Christians are called to live their faith according to these two models. The majority of disciples of Jesus are called to give witness to our faith somewhere in the middle, a point where contemplation and mission coincide in the here and now of ordinary life. For most Christians, this middle point is the daily experience of family life, work, and social relations through which we hope to make the world a better place.

We discover there are many ways of encountering God and bringing others to participate in that encounter in the everyday. The wisdom of the Christian community has affirmed that each baptized person has the responsibility of living our faith mirroring the life of Christ in our own particular way. Consequently, Christian disciples embody the values of the Gospel according to the uniqueness of our circumstances. On the one hand, we share the same faith, believe in the same Lord, and await the same salvation. On other hand, we live our faith in the distinctiveness of our relationships and our decisions or states of life.

God continues to invite us to respond to the divine revelation with the gift of faith. We join Peter and Christians who have declared for generations that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. As we proclaim with joy at the Easter Vigil, "This is our faith! This is the faith of the Church! We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord!" ✝

From *Peter's Catechism* (pages 26–27; 39), available at Liguori.org.

Wisdom from **Catholic UPDATE**

From "The Joy of Being Catholic" by Kathy Coffey

Answers from Catholics: What about the Church brings you joy?

- "Sometimes I can't sleep or I'm feeling blue. Then I remind myself that somewhere in the world, the Mass is happening. Bread and wine are being consecrated into the Christ's body and blood. Knowing that buoys me."
- "The faith offers us a healthy way to approach death. The ritual comforts us by saying, 'It's not the end; we'll see this person again.'"
- "The best thing is the companions—Jesus, the prophets, the desert dwellers, the saints, each other!"
- "I can find good people other places, but not this remarkable liturgy."
- "I think of the Catholic Church as a massive family. We're all welcome." ✝

Catholic Update—a subscription newsletter published eleven times a year—explores Church teaching and tradition on contemporary topics. Liguori.org • 800-325-9526

PRAYER

Faithful God, give us the grace to witness to your presence so that others may know you are a loving, merciful God. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 22–27

Monday, Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children: 2 Sm 5:1–7, 10 / Mk 3:22–30

Tuesday, Weekday: 2 Sm 6:12b–15, 17–19 / Mk 3:31–35

Wednesday, St. Francis de Sales: 2 Sm 7:4–17 / Mk 4:1–20

Thursday, Conversion of St. Paul: Acts 22:3–16 or Acts 9:1–22 / Mk 16:15–18

Friday, Sts. Timothy and Titus: 2 Tm 1:1–8 or Ti 1:1–5 / Mk 4:26–34

Saturday, Weekday: 2 Sm 12:1–7a, 10–17 / Mk 4:35–41

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