



CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

January 25, 2015

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel reading Mark 1:14-20 [To be read aloud]

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.

Brief commentary:

The binding theme in the readings of the first Sundays of Ordinary Time is that of *following Jesus Christ*. In this way we are called to seriously reflect on ‘what it means to follow Jesus Christ’, and what it means to do so in today’s world with its challenges and potentials. Each of today’s readings resound with a sense of urgency, each calls for decisiveness in responding to the call of God. For this, the image of ‘time’ looms large: Jonah gives Nineveh forty days to repent, Paul writes of “time running out,” and the gospel tells us that Jesus announced the ‘gospel of God’ with the words, “This is the time of fulfillment.” Each of the readings call for break with the old ways of sin, of living *as if* God did not exist and *as if* our lives did not have transcendent meaning and purpose before God, of living indifferent toward those are in need, of putting empty values above what is of true value. Because “the kingdom of God is at hand” all are to “repent and believe” in the good news of what God is doing in Jesus. Sometimes this call urges us not only to break with our old ways, but even with things that are not necessarily bad, but which inhibit us from a more radical, more total, more authentic, following of Jesus Christ: the disciples “abandoned their nets...and boat...and father...and followed him.” This Ordinary Time we hear the call of Jesus, “Come, follow me.” In our world we immediately can recognize the challenges that such a call implies: a different outlook, values, attitudes, priorities, way of life and being than those so often promoted and popular. For many in affluent societies, it implies a break from our commercial and image-driven culture and values, from our infatuation with materialism and consumer items that we place so much importance in, get so excited about, and use in defining and giving meaning to our lives. It means a break from, not with our enjoyment of, but with our obsession and attention on our entertainers and entertainment. The disciples left their boats; we need to leave behind our prejudices, our shallowness, our worries and fears, our ways of thinking and living that do not conform to God’s will. We leave these and many other things behind (we ‘repent’) *so that* we can be *free for* truly ‘believing’ by loving God above all else, by loving our neighbor as ourselves, by putting the cause of the reign of God first, putting people (not things) first, reaching out to people who are in need, doing our part to forge a more just and compassionate society. Today we are told not to wait, not to hesitate, but to decisively respond wholeheartedly, and follow Jesus Christ, leaving behind whatever hinders us from authentically following his teaching and example. Because Christians are those who *believe* in Jesus Christ, they must also be those who *follow* Jesus Christ. With so many resources available today, Christians can use these to further transform a world so much in need of the Gospel of peace and justice, healing and salvation, compassion and hope, and to do so in practical concrete ways in every sector of life: personal, interpersonal and familial, community and national, internationally and ecologically. Following Jesus Christ implies taking responsibility for being courageous agents of the kingdom of God, which is ‘at hand’.

Today’s reading offers significant messages:

- At the beginning of Ordinary Time, the Scriptures challenge us with an urgent call to a change of thinking and living, a call to repentance and believing.
- Just as the disciples left behind something in order to follow Jesus, so we too are called to become *free from* of what hinders and constricts us, in order to be *free for* following Jesus more completely in today’s world, with its challenges and potentials.
- To follow Jesus Christ in our times involves become creative and courageous agents of the Gospel in every sector of society, helping to transform a world in need of God’s salvation.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

- Am I ready to hear and answer God’s call in my life today?
- What do I need to leave behind in order to follow Jesus Christ more completely?
- What are the challenges that I face in following Jesus Christ in society? What potentials exist for me to be a more effective agent of God’s reign in society?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 142-75