

## Third Sunday of Ordinary Time -- 2012

In today's gospel St. Mark tells us that Christ gets the attention of some ordinary fishermen by calling them to drop their nets and follow him. In all the gospels when Christ calls someone to follow him he expects a response. The same is true in our life as well. Some people call that response 'Conversion' or 'Turning to Christ'---which is never simply a ONE time event, but in fact a life long series of choices and changes which unfold with the grace of God.

St. Mark tells us the basic message of Christ is that the Kingdom of God is near. Therefore, we are to repent and believe in the good news. But what exactly is this good news we are called to believe in? Let's try to understand the message:

The GOOD NEWS is:

- 1st--That God loves each and everyone of us as His own dear children because of our Baptism
- 2nd--Whenever we are stuck in fear, failure or frustration, Christ will always come to us with God's freedom, forgiveness, and friendship.
- 3rd--No matter what we have done in life--or failed to do--the Gospel teaches us that no one is ever outside the reach of God's mercy.
- 4th--There is only one thing in the entire universe that God cannot do; God simply cannot stop loving us.
- 5th-- For every step that you and I take toward Christ in conversion, He takes at least twice as many toward us in compassion.
- 6th--There is NO limit to what the Power of God's grace can change in the human heart.
- 7th--You and I are saved NOT because we are worthy; but we are saved simply because we are LOVED.

Now if that is really what the Good News is all about; then who in their right mind would not want to change and to repent? Usually repentance means to turn away from sin and to turn to the path of Christ and His way of life. For some few individuals this may come in a dramatic moment, like St. Paul's conversion experience. But for most others this transformation of our personality develops slowly and over a period of time. Sometimes even with a good number of spiritual stumbles and setbacks. Still Christ calls us again and again to get up and follow Him with the help of His grace. Remember, for every single step we take toward Him in conversion, Christ always takes twice as many toward us in compassion.

I read somewhere how an Episcopal priest explained why he made the Sign of the Cross when he prayed. He said:

When we use the Sign of the Cross we touch our forehead and our chest making a capital "I". Then we continue by touching one shoulder then the other, sort of "cutting the I in half ". This reminds us of God's saving work in the Cross---changing the I into a new creation with Christ, freeing us from the bondage of self and giving us new beginning in God's love.

Christ's basic Gospel message remains ever the same for us here today:

We are called to believe in God's unfailing love for us and then we are to surrender to that love in repentance and in conversion. Repentance calls us each day to think more often of Christ and less often of our selves. Conversion calls us to turn us around in our tracks and begin to allow God's Grace to reform and reshape our hearts and minds in our homes;  
to reform and reshape our actions and attitudes at work;  
to reform and reshape our choices and values in our society; and  
to reform and reshape our conduct and behavior at school.

May we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus then and pray for this Grace in our lives this week.

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