

### **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time: Sunday of the Word of God**

Isaiah 8:23-9:3; Psalm 27:1,4,13-14; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13,17; Matthew 4:12-23

Dear friends and family of the Co-Cathedral of St. Theresa Parish,

"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Mat. 4:19). Consider this as the most important text message you received this week, and you might consider forwarding it with a reflection of your response.

This invitation of our Lord Jesus is a fitting theme for this weekend, the Sunday of the Word of God. Pope Francis declared on September 30, 2019, that every Third Sunday of Ordinary Time would be celebrated as the Sunday of the Word of God. The Word of God is essential in all the Church's liturgical celebrations. There could be no liturgical celebrations without listening to the Word of God. God speaks to his people when the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church (cf. GIRM, no. 29). Hence, after the proclamation, it is concluded by saying "the Word of the Lord."

The invitation to come and follow Jesus presupposes listening. Listening is the first act of discipleship, for one can't be a disciple without listening; hence to be a disciple means to learn from the master. Listening is a posture to access the divine life and the wisdom of our Lord, for without it, we are like living in a dead spot or dead zone where there is no life and connection.

It is an unpleasant experience to be disconnected and isolated. Like Israel of old, described by Prophet Isaiah, the people were sitting in darkness, living under the shadow of death, without a prospect of relief. They were disconnected, the absence of comforting words from God. Amid the shadow of death, Prophet Isaiah announced God's promise that a powerful light would one day cast away the darkness, change their condition, and bring them joy (cf. Is 8:23-9:3).

Jesus is the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Isaiah. He entered the towns and villages of Galilee, proclaiming: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mat. 4:17). God's power through him swept through the town and villages, lifting the burden of unhappiness from people's shoulders, giving them a new sense of meaning, curing their sickness liberating them from the power of the devil (cf. Mat 4:23-25). This manifestation of God's power in Jesus now invites people to join his company, offering an opportunity for a loving and meaningful relationship. "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Had Peter and the rest of the first disciples ignored Jesus' words, their lives would remain on the shoreline, tending their nets. They would remain to catch fish, never cross borders, and never encounter the marvelous workings of God. Because they listened and followed him, they realized they were not just ordinary fishermen but as what they could be with Jesus, light to the world. Their response provides a picture of what is involved in responding to Jesus' invitation – they listen, leave their old life behind, stay with Jesus, and become sharers of the mission.

To come and follow our Lord is an ongoing reminder and invitation for all of us. We called ourselves Christians, literally little Christ or like Christ, and our vocation is to live with him, in him, and for him, that is, to grow into his likeness. One needful way to grow in Christ is to read the Bible and allow it to speak to us with joy and eagerness as the psalmist proclaims, "The Lord is my light and salvation," because the Word of God is superior and exhaustible means for the food of our souls and the light of our lives. "For man does not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God that comes from his mouth (Mat 4:4). It is like the blood streams that bring nourishment and vitality to every area of our bodies darkened by sin.

The good news is that when we listen, ponder, and accept it in faith, God enters our lives and brings renewed vitality and surprising wisdom. Hence, God's Word is dynamic and not frozen artifacts inside the pages of the Bible. It has a power like the rain and snow from heaven that come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful; it shall not return empty but shall do what pleases God, achieving the end for which he sent it (cf. Is. 55:10-11). If we listen to his voice and open the door, he will come into us and eat with us; we will be with him' (cf. Rev. 3:20). His entrance will abundantly bring light,

for he who listens to the Lord will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (cf. John 8:12). As the psalmist proclaims, "The Lord is my light and salvation." This light grows brighter as we become more familiar with the Word of God, find time in prayer, constantly seek forgiveness, and regularly receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Let this invitation of the Lord bring delight to our hearts as we listen and ponder our response anew, joining the psalmist's disposition to acknowledge, "the Lord is my light and salvation" (Psalm 27:1).

God bless you.

Fr. Manny Hewe, Pastor

"Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ!" St. Jerome