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## Third Sunday in Ordinary Time - 21 January 2024

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# 21 January 2024

## Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Anthony Doran

### Introduction

Another Sunday...another set of readings that talk of God's call and the response this call asks of us. Can we respond with the simplicity and immediacy of the disciples in the Gospel? Or are we a bit more like Jonah – somewhat reluctant? However, whenever, we are called, it is a call that demands a response.

### Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came to call us to follow you. Lord have mercy.

You came that we might know the ways of God. Christ have mercy.

You came to share your spirit with us all. Lord have mercy.

### Collect

*The oration*

Almighty ever-living God,

direct our actions according to your good pleasure,

that in the name of your beloved Son

we may abound in good works.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

God, for ever and ever.

It is no accident that this oration is prayed in the first month of the year. Its seventh-century origins lay in sets of Mass prayers for the days after Christmas, and especially those around the incoming of the new year. The Christmas context heightened the sense of God's 'good pleasure' in the incarnation as a central act in the mystery of the divine saving will. Further, the new year conjured up associations with the pagan god Janus and the influence of old divinities and spirits. It was these, in particular, that the collect unequivocally placed under the power of the 'name' of

the beloved Son. The petition that the faithful abound in good works was the church's response to the licentious cavorting that marked the Janus festivities.

Yet the prayer has another layer of meaning. The Latin text corresponds in structure, content, and vocabulary to the Vulgate Latin translation of Ephesians 1:3-2:10. It speaks of the free and bounteous grace of God. It denotes the fullness of blessings that come in Christ, and the continuing power of Christ's name over every situation and evil. In this, it calls the faithful to abound in good works, works which correspond to the blessings of God, are worthy of the name of the beloved Son, and so are pleasing to God. On reflection, this prayer provides a good test of those easily forgotten New Year resolutions!

### **Acknowledgement**

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

## **First Reading**

### **Jonah 3:1-5, 10**

Jonah is called by God to go to Nineveh and preach repentance to them. At once, Jonah responds in obedience to the call of God and sets out as he has been called to do. The Ninevites repent and God relents.

## **Responsorial Psalm**

### **Psalm 24:4-9. R. v. 4**

*Teach me your ways, O Lord.*

This psalm is sometimes known as a wisdom psalm – a reflection on the wisdom of God and the goodness of God towards those who walk these paths.

## **Second Reading**

### **1 Corinthians 7:29-31**

Paul and his audience in Corinth lived in expectation of the imminent end of the world as they knew it. In this light, Paul counsels the Corinthians to live new lives as a consequence of their life in Christ.

## **Gospel Reading**

### **Mark 1:14-20**

This Sunday, we read Mark's version of the call of the first four disciples: Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew, together with James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

'At once' they leave their nets and follow Jesus. Do we follow 'at once' when we hear God's call?

## Reflection

Sometimes, it seems as if God gets it wrong. That of all the things God could have done, God just stuffs it up. Take one look at today's Gospel Reading. He calls as his followers four fishermen. Simon and his brother Andrew; and James and John, the sons of Zebedee. What is going on here?

Fishermen back then would not have been the obvious choice for Jesus to choose as his followers. For they would not have been well educated. Certainly, they would have known about tides and climate and the price their catch might bring in. But they certainly would not have been the educated elite. The brief account we have today in Mark's Gospel does not specify if Simon and Andrew and James and John were up with the religious elite of their time. I suspect they were not. But Jesus calls these four fishermen to follow him. And not just to follow him, but also to share in his work. To become fishers of men and women.

What are we to make of this? It is tempting to think that God does get it wrong. That if we were in charge, we would have made a better fist of things. That is the temptation to look at things with human eyes. That is a temptation we must avoid.

Actually, God does not get it wrong. God never gets it wrong. Yes, Jesus does call the four fishermen to follow him. But Jesus does not wait for them to be perfect. He calls them as they are. With their imperfections, with all their faults and failings.

And perhaps the more surprising thing is that these fishermen do indeed follow Jesus. These fishermen do not wait until they are perfect, until they have it all together before they decide to follow Jesus. They follow Jesus when he calls them.

The story of these four fishermen is also our story. We too are called by Jesus to follow him. And Jesus does not wait until we are perfect. Jesus does not wait until we have it all together and have all the answers. If he did, Christian life would be a bit boring. And reasonably lacking in disciples.

God calls us in the midst of our life. Whether we are priest or layperson, married or single, young or old, or whatever. We are called to follow Jesus.

And, like Simon and Andrew and James and John, we are not called just to follow Jesus. Like them we are called to share in the task of proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom. All of us share in this task of proclaiming the Kingdom. It is not a task restricted to bishops and priests. Certainly, ordained ministers have a special role in the task of evangelisation. But they are not the only players. Thank God! All of us share in bringing the Kingdom to birth in our time.

For it is not just about preaching the Kingdom in words. We preach the Kingdom in what we do far more eloquently and powerfully than by any words which we may speak. And that is why bishops and priests are not the only players in the

evangelisation stakes. All of us who are baptised are called to proclaim the reign of God's love.

But we don't do it by the number of hours we spend in front of the Blessed Sacrament. We don't do it by how many rosaries or novenas or chaplets we might say. Prayer is important, but it is only the beginning, only half the story.

We do this when we hold out our hands to someone in need.

We do this when we walk together with our brothers and sisters who may need our companionship and accompaniment.

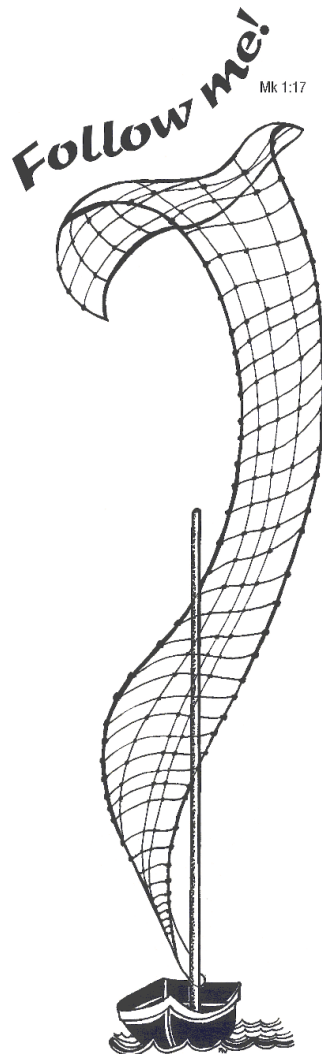
We do this when we help someone else find their place in the world.

We do this when we get our hands dirty helping someone else.

As Pope Francis has reminded us, the Church should be like a field hospital on a battle field: ready to bind up the wounds of those who are hurt.

When we can be the sort of Church that Pope Francis challenges us to be...when these things happen, as our Gospel Reading tells us: the Kingdom of God is close at hand.

Indeed, very close.



# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

God calls each of us in our own unique way with all of the neediness that we have so let us turn to God with the needs of ourselves and our world.

## Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Church that they will keep Pope Francis' words in mind and bind up the wounds of those who are suffering.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have been called to lead the nations of the world. May they truly find the spirit within them to work for peace and unity, not war and greed for power.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who feel neglected and damaged by life. May they be inspired to seek the care of others in face to face contact and be released from the power of devices.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those working in the medical profession. May they learn to carefully nurture each other so that the work they do can be more effective and less stressful.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those suffering from war, natural disasters, and famine. May those who can reach out to them be there at the right time and may we be generous in our support of such agencies.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have lost loved ones over the holiday period. May they be accompanied on their journey of grief with friends and loved ones who understand.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

## Conclusion

Loving God you call us to live our faith and in that faith, we know that you will answer all our needs. We make our prayer through the power of the Spirit and in the name of your son, Jesus.

**Amen.**

## Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

| Title                               | AOV1 | AOV2 | AOVK | CWB | CWBII | GA  |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----|-------|-----|
| Amazing grace                       | 29   |      |      |     | 450   | 437 |
| A new heart for a new world         | 158  |      |      |     | 477   | 438 |
| Be not afraid                       | 114  |      |      |     | 652   | 420 |
| Bring forth the kingdom             |      | 4    |      |     | 647   | 478 |
| Come to the feast                   | 151  |      |      |     |       | 400 |
| Glory and praise to our God         | 16   |      |      |     | 491   | 417 |
| Grant to us, O Lord                 |      |      |      | 698 | 291   | 303 |
| Lord, you give the great commission |      |      |      |     | 308   | 313 |
| O God, your people gather           |      |      |      |     | 574   |     |
| Praise, my soul, the king of heaven | 78   |      |      | 789 | 588   |     |
| Send us as your blessing, Lord      | 181  |      |      |     |       |     |
| Sing a new song                     | 80   |      |      |     | 598   | 414 |
| Sing a new song to the Lord         |      | 76   |      |     | 600   |     |
| Take the word of God                |      |      |      |     | 607   | 494 |
| The Spirit of God                   |      |      |      | 832 | 388   | 185 |
| The summons                         |      |      |      |     | 645   | 502 |
| The table of God                    |      |      | 8    |     |       |     |
| The voice of God                    |      |      |      | 835 | 621   | 476 |
| To you, O Lord, I lift my soul      |      |      |      | 850 |       |     |
| We are children of the living God   |      |      | 15   |     |       |     |
| We are many parts                   | 86   |      |      |     |       |     |
| When we listen                      |      |      | 132  |     |       |     |
| You walk along our shoreline        |      |      |      |     | 653   |     |

| Title                            | S&S1 | S&S2 |
|----------------------------------|------|------|
| The summons                      | 137  |      |
| To you, O God, I lift up my soul | 60   |      |
| To you, O Lord                   |      | 251  |

## Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 24: *Teach me your ways, O Lord.*

|          | CWB | JOBB   | LPB    |
|----------|-----|--------|--------|
| Psalm 24 | 356 | pg. 26 | pg. 92 |

## Music selections by Michael Mangan

Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWB II) *based on Ps 97 (98)* [Gathering, Recessional]

Your words (FWS) *based on Ps 18(19)* [Gifts]

One body in Christ (TWB) [Communion]

Live in the light (TWB) [Gifts, Communion]

The light of my life (TCS) [Gifts, Reflection]