

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Learn Your Mission

The feast of the Epiphany of our Lord, when the three wise men came from far away to worship Jesus, the “newborn King,” has passed, as has the feast of the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River, which is celebrated after Epiphany Sunday. Epiphany Sunday is also the last Sunday of the Christmas season. Advent and Christmas (and Hallowe’en and Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day) have all come and gone. Therefore, we are back to Ordinary Time in the Church liturgical year. There’s that word again. *Ordinary*, as in Ordinary Time. It’s called Ordinary Time from the Latin, *ordinare*, which means to put into order or to count. It’s not Advent or Christmas or Lent or Easter or any other feast day. It’s Ordinary Time, not because there’s anything ordinary about it. As we all know, all Sundays are special. We get an opportunity to commune with our Lord, which is a very Holy Communion. There’s nothing ordinary about that. These Sundays are counted during the year because they are not part of special liturgical seasons.

A question you often get asked when younger is what do you want to be when you grow up. The answer to this question is usually only a guess, since you, if you are still young when answering the question, have not had much of a chance yet to experience the world, and you will likely change your mind many times before actually “growing up.” In fact, you might even be influenced by God, if you pay attention. What do you think Jesus wanted to be when He grew up? Well, obviously He had a very important job ahead of Him. But being the Son of God and the Savior of the world is more than just a job. A better word might be *mission* or *vocation*. Mission or vocation in this use would be a strong calling to perform an important task or duty.

This is the second week in a row that the Church wants us to think about how Jesus was able to figure out what His mission was supposed to be, so it must be important for us to understand. It obviously involved listening to His Father. To do that, we

remember that He had the Scriptures, which is the same as our Old Testament. The New Testament had not been written yet, since the New Testament is about Jesus' works and teachings, and when He was young, no one had written anything yet. A good place in the Scriptures where Jesus could turn to in order to hear the word of God would be the books of the prophets. The *mission* of the prophets was to hear the word of God and speak it to the people through Scripture. Since Jesus read the Scriptures a lot, He probably read the books of the prophets a lot.

Today's first reading comes yet again from the prophet Isaiah. And we know that Jesus was very familiar with the prophet Isaiah from the many times He would quote Isaiah in the gospels. Today's reading was read by Jesus two thousand years before we heard or read it (think about that).

A reading from the Book of Isaiah (**Isaiah 49:3, 5-6**).

The Lord said to me, "Israel, you are My servant, and because of you, I will be highly honored." Even before I was born, the Lord chose me to serve Him and to bring back the people of Israel. The Lord has honored me and made me strong. Now the Lord says to me, "It isn't enough for you to be merely my servant. You must do more than lead back those from the tribes of Israel who have survived. I have placed you here as a light for the Gentiles. You are to take My saving power everywhere on earth." The Word of the Lord.

In this reading, Isaiah is writing about the Suffering Servant, which Christian scholars believe was Isaiah speaking about the Messiah, the Christ. So a young Jesus reading this passage from Isaiah would see, "You are my servant...from the womb," and might hear this word of God speaking directly to Him, helping Him to understand His *mission* to be "the light of all nations," whose "salvation may reach the ends of the earth." We don't see that the servant is suffering in today's reading. He does suffer in the verses

leading up to today's first reading. There is work and pain in His *mission*, which also contributes to making it more than just a job.

Now let's turn our attention to the Psalm for today, Psalm #40.

Responsorial Psalm (**Psalm 40:2&4, 9&12**)

(8a & 9a) Here am I Lord; I come to do Your will.

Here am I Lord; I come to do Your will.

I patiently waited, Lord, for You to hear my prayer. You listened, and You gave me a new song, a song of praise to you.

Here am I Lord; I come to do Your will.

"I enjoy pleasing You. Your Law is in my heart." You, Lord, never fail to have pity on me; Your mercy and faithfulness always protect me.

Here am I Lord; I come to do Your will.

Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will. And how we can know what God wills us to do is to listen to Him in places like the Bible, or in church, or whenever and wherever we pray.

Our second reading comes as it always does from the New Testament, and as it almost always does, from St. Paul. Paul never met Jesus when He was living. He did meet Him when he was knocked off his horse. Jesus said to him, "Why do you persecute me?" Paul then came to discover *his* mission, to *spread*, not to destroy, Christianity beyond Israel, throughout the eastern Mediterranean lands all the way to Rome, and ultimately to us, through the Bible. Today we have the first of many Sundays of readings from St. Paul to the people of Corinth, the Corinthians.

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor 1:1-3)

From Paul, chosen by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from Sosthenes, who is also a follower. To the church of God that is in Corinth. Christ Jesus chose you to be His very own people, and you worship in His name, as we and all those everywhere who call Jesus their Lord. My prayer is that God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ will be kind to you and bless you with peace! The Word of the Lord.

This reading is Paul's greeting to the Corinthians, the very first words of the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians. And even in these short few words, Paul talks of his *mission* to be an apostle. And he speaks of the *mission* of the people of Corinth. They are called to be holy with all those everywhere who call Jesus their Lord. Since we call Jesus our Lord, then that includes us in the mission to be holy. Paul is talking, and will be talking for the next few weeks during his readings to the Corinthians, not just to the Corinthians, but to all of us. We need to listen to what he will be saying to us so we can better understand *our* Christian missions.

The final part of this week's liturgy of the word includes the gospel (preceded by the gospel acclamation).

Alleluia, Alleluia. *Alleluia, Alleluia.*

The word of God became flesh and dwelt among us, letting those who accepted Him become the children of God.

Alleluia, Alleluia.

+ A reading from the holy gospel according to St. John (John 1:29-34).

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said: “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I told you about when I said, ‘Someone else will come. He is greater than I am, because He was alive before I was born.’ “I didn’t know who He was. But I came to baptize you with water, so that everyone in Israel would see Him. “I was there and saw the Spirit come down on Him like a dove from heaven. And the Spirit stayed on Him. Before this I didn’t know who He was. But the one who sent me to baptize with water had told me, ‘You will see the Spirit come down and stay on someone. Then you will know that He is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ “I saw this happen, and I tell you that He is the Son of God.” The gospel of the Lord.

We remember St. John the Baptist. We read about him not too long ago during Advent. He had a *mission* to baptize people with water as a sign that they intended to change their lives for the better in anticipation of the coming of the promised one. And at the very beginning of today’s gospel reading, what does John say when he sees Jesus? He says “Behold the Lamb of God. Behold Him who takes away the sin of the world.” When else we hear those words is at every Mass right before we receive Communion. “Happy are we who are called to the supper of the Lamb,” as Jesus called us to do at the Last Supper in memory of Him. And with that announcement, John told the world about Jesus’ *mission* to save the world from sin. Jesus, of course, knew that already. He listened to God the Father to know *His* mission. Paul listened to God the Son to know *his* mission. And if we listen carefully to God through Isaiah, through St. Paul, through St. John the Baptist, through the Bible, we will learn *our* mission.

And that, girls and boys, is the lesson in today’s readings. Speak about it with your parents.

The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2023
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