

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Cycle A, 1.26.2020

Isaiah 8: 23-9:3; 1 Corinthians 1: 10-13, 17

Matthew 4: 12-23

#### **ONE MIND... ONE THOUGHT...**

#### **ONE PURPOSE**

I was born on Hamilton Air Force base in Marin County, north of San Francisco. When I was a toddler that is what my parents taught me and once, when I was young and our family was traveling, our parents introduced our family stating: "We're from California." And I piped up, "Not me, I'm from Hamilton!" not then understanding that Hamilton was situated within California. I still have not lived that down. And later in faith formation class the catechist told us that by baptism we became Christians. Again, I piped up: "I'm a Catholic!" not then understanding that we Catholics are indeed actually Christians first and foremost.



In the parish where I most recently served as pastor, I changed the signs and stationary from Holy Cross Catholic Church to Holy Cross Catholic Parish because we were not a church but rather a unit, a subdivision, of the diocese of Charlotte and part of something much larger and greater and more important. Last week we heard the opening address of Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians addressed: "to the church of God that is in Corinth." It was a subtle reminder which, today we hear spelled out clearly in the second reading, that we are not

followers of Paul or Apollos or Cephas or Martin Luther or Wesley, but of Jesus the Christ. There is but one Church.

Traditionally the four marks or characteristics of the Church are that it is One (many distinct parts united), Holy (filled with the Spirit of God), catholic (universal) and apostolic (is sent forth to interact with the world). We are one, holy, catholic and apostolic or we are not authentically Christian. The scriptures today call us to examine how we identify or misidentify ourselves and others. Do we identify ourselves by our occupation or by where we were born or where we currently live? Do we identify ourselves as Catholic Christians? Are we patriotic and identify ourselves by our national citizenship or country of origin? Do we identify ourselves by the relationships we have? Most of us probably identify ourselves by some combination of these and other facets of our lives.

In our second reading St. Paul admonishes the Corinthian Christians and us not to carve up the body of Christ into portions and factions. Does the way we identify ourselves lead us toward unity or division? Do we consider ourselves first a republican or democrat or primarily an American? Do we consider ourselves primarily Catholics or Christians?



How often we think and act as though Jesus and the Virgin Mary were both Catholics instead of remembering that during their entire existence upon this earth they were both Jewish? How often do our interactions with other Christians reflect that we are all members of the Body of Christ with Jesus as the head of the body? How often do we look at other people and see sisters and brothers of one human family with God as our Father? The way we identify ourselves helps shape who we trust, who we will listen to and believe, and what we will allow to interrupt our plans or cause us to change our plans and our lives. We sometimes may trivialize the call of Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John that we heard in today's gospel by making it so unrealistic that it cannot possibly apply to us. It would have been utter madness for the four of them to drop their nets and follow a total stranger.



Certainly they had already met Jesus before this encounter and had answered his invitation to come and see where and how he lived. James and John were probably cousins of Jesus. Yet somehow these four and others came to identify Jesus as someone who they wanted to follow and someone who would lead them closer to God. Jesus probably did not completely yank them out of their former lives; they did not make a complete, irrevocable break with what they had been doing. We know Simon

was married since Jesus cured his mother-in-law and he had children as well. He had obligations and responsibilities that he could not simply abandon to follow Jesus. Most of us are called to live Jesus not in monasteries but through the various occupations and vocations necessary for our community to function and flourish. We are all called to strive to live our lives in such a way that we reflect that our first allegiance is to our citizenship in heaven which we received by baptism into the Body of Christ regardless of our occupation, vocation or avocation. Jesus calls all of us to follow him, makes us all fishers of men and women!

When John the Baptist was arrested, Jesus realized that he could no longer anonymously practice his faith and let others lead. With John's arrest Jesus realized he had to step up and continue and complete John's message, preaching that we must repent, for the kingdom of heaven is very close to us.



To repent is sometimes translated as turning away from sin. All of us are called to repentance. For most of us repenting does not usually require drastic changes of course in our lives. More often repentance simply means paying closer attention to the shifting, changing situations of our lives and being willing to have our plans and lives interrupted by God so we can lovingly respond in a manner similar to how we imagine Jesus would have responded.

Repentance is striving to live Jesus by making God the center of our lives. The scriptures today tell us that Jesus calls us to follow him and came to light our way. With God's grace may we boldly identify ourselves as Catholic Christians and be recognized as such by the way we love one another, forgive one another and befriend enemies. May we join our prayers to the prayer of Jesus for unity among all Christians. And may we be attentive and responsive to God's individualized call to each one of us and live out our faith in concrete actions in our community. May God be blessed.

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