

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday per Annum - A  
Isaiah 8:23-9:3;  
I Corinthians 1:10-13, 17;  
Matthew 4:12-23  
Little Flower - 1/22/23

My Brothers and Sisters,

It is important that we read today's Gospel in light of what came before. The first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel are the infancy narratives. Chapter 3 contains the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus' baptism by John. Chapter 4, which is the chapter from which today's Gospel is taken, begins with Jesus' temptation in the desert. Today's Gospel marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus' public ministry would only last approximately three years before his crucifixion. One might say that Jesus spent thirty years preparing for three years.

Like Jesus, we all spend a significant part of our early life preparing for our adult life. When I was in Rome, Cardinal John Wright gave a homily at the North American College during which he asked us if the airplane on which we were traveling home after ordination was going to crash would we feel that we had wasted our life or that our life had no real meaning since we had never served as a priest after 12 years of preparation. He wanted to make the point that God calls us to live in the moment. We absolutely should remember and learn from the past. We absolutely should look forward to and prepare for the future. However, we should live fully in the moment.

One of my great concerns is for children, teenagers, and young adults. I think our society and culture forces them to grow up too quickly. Already in the 1980's, David Elkind wrote two books that were popular in youth ministry circles, *The Hurried Child* and *All Grown Up And No Place To Go*. The titles capture the content of the books. For example, through social media young people are exposed to so much more than we were at such an early age. Many of them have real and demanding jobs while they are in high school. For many college students, their work life takes precedence over their school life. High school couples even live with each other! They are hurried children who are all grown up with no place to go.

When Jesus began his public ministry, he was a man on a mission. First, he had a core message from which he never wavered. His core message was “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” The Good News or Gospel was that in him the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, was already beginning to be present. The Good News or Gospel also called people to repent. The Greek word for *repent* does not so much suggest being sorry for specific sins but turning our lives around and seeing in new ways. In other words, to repent is to turn away from selfishness and sin and turn toward God and others in love.

Second, if Jesus was going to fulfill his mission, he needed disciples. In today's Gospel, he chose Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Jesus chose fishermen, not priests, Pharisees, or Levites. In other words, he chose ordinary people. Therefore, we need to believe that Christ is calling us, no matter who we are, to be his disciples. We should never reject his call because we feel unworthy or unqualified.

My brothers and sisters, Msgr. Bosler once told me that First Corinthians could be the basis for an entire RCIA program today. I would suggest that today's second reading has never been more relevant to the Church. First, Paul writes to the Corinthians that there should be no divisions among them but that they should be of one mind and purpose. He then challenges them with reports of rivalries and divisions among them. Some claimed to belong to Paul, others to Apollos, still others to Cephas or to Christ.

Right now the Catholic Church is a divided church. For example, some younger Catholics and some younger priests claim to be Pope John Paul II Catholics or priests. Some people claim to be Pope Benedict or Pope Francis Catholics. I think social media encourages this divisive thinking. According to St. Paul, we are all members of the one body of Christ of which Christ is the one head.