

Homily for 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time - Jan 2023 (Year A)

January 21/22, 2023

By Deacon Richard Hay

“Scripture, Light, and Our Call”

Today, my homily has three parts – almost like three mini homilies in one – but I promise it will not be three times as long!

A few years ago, the Holy Father declared that the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time, today, would be observed as Word of God Sunday. The intention is to remind us to celebrate, study, and spend time with the Word of God. It is an opportunity to emphasize the importance of holy scripture in the life of the church and in our own lives.

The running joke has always been that we Catholics never read our bibles. That has changed significantly though, because many Catholics do spend time with scripture for prayer and reflection. However, the joke had some shortfalls because it assumes that Catholics never hear holy scripture.

While many Catholics might not have been reading the bible themselves – every Catholic who attended any Mass was hearing right

from the scriptures. The obvious places were the readings, responsorial psalms, and of course the proclamation of the gospel.

We hear even more from scripture as the priest says the words of consecration at the altar in the person of Christ – the same words that are throughout the gospel accounts of the last supper when Christ instituted the mass on Holy Thursday.

We hear scripture each time we come to mass and as the mass is the source and summit of our faith – that is a very good thing.

Could we spend more time with holy scripture outside of the mass – absolutely and we should. That could be as simple as praying over the readings for the mass at home or here in the pews even as you wait for mass to begin. Maybe join Fr. Mike's weekly bible study or use the numerous resources the church provides on the web about scripture. The goal is not to become a scripture scholar – but to simply spend a little more time reading and praying over the scriptures and letting those words speak to our hearts and our souls. As always, make sure to spend quiet time afterwards and give God a chance to speak to us through the holy scriptures.

One of the themes of our readings and gospel today is about light and darkness – something we hear of very often throughout scripture. The connective thread from the first reading, which is from Isaiah, is the prophecy that reads *the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone*. Then, in the gospel, is the fulfillment of that prophecy thru Jesus's ministry.

The truth is that darkness cannot overcome light. If we walk in the light of the Lord and share that light – share that faith with our families, friends, our fellow parishioners, and even the strangers we meet – then darkness cannot overcome us. Next week, we will hear from the Gospel of Matthew about the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus shares the Beatitudes. There is a scripture verse just after that where Jesus reminds the crowd that we do not light a lamp and then place it under a bushel basket – instead that lamp is placed up on a stand where it gives light to the whole house.

That is the kind of light we all should work to be in our lives – one that is bright and lights up wherever we might find ourselves.

The second theme from this Sunday's scripture is about vocations – we heard in the gospel how Jesus walked up and called Simon, Andrew,

James, and John right from their fishing boats – and how did they react when called?

Did they challenge Jesus and ask – are you talking to me – a simple fisherman? No, they once and immediately dropped their nets and what they were doing and joined Jesus – no hesitation – no thinking about it – they just did it.

Feels like a scary proposition, doesn't it? Just dropping everything that we know of our own lives and unconditionally following someone who walks up and just asks us to do so.

I recently shared about my own vocational call to the diaconate with the Council of Catholic Women here at Sacred Heart. I told them after joining the Catholic church in May of 1987, I started to be prompted about ordained service in the church. I even at one time told Margo that I thought I might have liked to have been a priest.

I managed to push that call aside for almost 20 years before finally saying yes in 2008. Whether it was my own disbelief in being truly called to such a vocation or fear of what it might mean to follow that calling – I managed to keep it at bay until one day during Eucharistic Adoration

when I clearly heard the voice of God say to me “When are you going to hear my call?”.

Those words in that moment were as clear as any indication I had been given over the previous twenty years – but in that moment I believe I was more ready to hear them – more ready to trust them because of my own growth in faith.

God is persistent and patient – whether He gets you to drop everything you are doing in that very moment to follow him like the apostles did or He waits 20 years for it to happen – if he is calling us to be part of the light of the world – I don’t believe there is any way to ultimately deny His call. We have to be willing to open our hearts and say yes to our own vocation whether that is as a priest, deacon, religious, husband, wife, parent, single, or any other number of ministries in the church.

It all begins with our “yes”.

Our yes to holy scripture, our yes to being light in the world, and yes when Jesus calls us.