

# Connecting With the Sunday Readings

## Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

It is as if we are at the beginning of a movie, slowly being introduced to the main characters of the story. There's the Holy Family, John the Baptist, and now, four fishermen. In today's Gospel reading Jesus presents the plot.

Beginnings are often very important and instructive. Basic themes are orchestrated; the spirit of what is to follow takes on flesh. As Jesus began his public life, he immediately began to call followers. Those first disciples were fishermen. They fished not as a hobby but to provide food for others. As fishermen, they already possessed some helpful skills for the work of spreading the Gospel. Fishermen are patient people. They know what it's like to try and fail. They know that they are not in full control. Their catch comes to them, not the other way around.

God distributes different skills and abilities to each of us, and expects we will use whatever it is that we have been given, to do the work of the Kingdom of God. Each person brings something special to expanding the work of God in this life.

### A Gospel Word for the Home

#### Mark 1:14–20

Here are the words to the *plot* mentioned above: "...the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15). The mention of "come near" implies that the game has begun, the clock is running. This is not a dress rehearsal; it's for real! God's great work of making a *new* creation, the healing of humankind from its many ills, was beginning. This is the heart of the "Gospel," or "Good News." To get into its flow, the followers of Jesus must "repent," which in this context means "to change." We are to be open to working with God in the most important activity of all time.

But for most followers, it will not mean leaving our old occupation or responsibilities, but doing them in a new way. This new way flows from thinking about what we do, not simply as a way to survive or to make a living, but as a way to join God in making the world a better place. It will involve feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty. In simple language, it invites us to be kind and generous to others. Loving our neighbor (which includes ourselves and our families) is part of the kingdom-life that Jesus started. On the surface, this may not appear spectacular. But deep down, each act that we do in the spirit of faith and service has eternal significance. And many of these acts take place in the ordinary circumstances of our lives as parents, workers, and friends.

## Parent Survival

A good sauce will improve most any meal. Ask the great chefs of the world. They all start with simple ingredients, but add just the right mix of seasonings to provide a gourmet delight. That's a lot like what Jesus was hinting at in today's Gospel reading. Contributing to God's kingdom is like adding an extra dimension to our lives. This includes a "change" which sees with the eyes of faith. We see that getting a glass of water for a crying child in the middle of the night is a deed that has profound significance. It's our way of helping Jesus build the Kingdom of God. We have opportunities to do this every day. Like fish alongside the boat, the opportunities just show up. We have to "catch" them. We have to give of ourselves: our time, attention, and energy to help out.

Parents are like those first Apostles, who live the Gospel in acts of service that are too many to count. Sometimes, parents need to stop for a minute and reflect on all the ways that parenting contributes to the growth of God's kingdom.

## Car or Meal Talk

Name one act of service each family member has done in the last few days to "build God's kingdom."

## One-Line Prayer

God the Holy Spirit,  
Send us places where we can make your  
love real.  
Amen.