

January 22, 2023

Cycle A – 3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Isaiah 8:23 – 9:3

Psalm: 27:1, 4, 13-14

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

Matthew 4:12-23

Notes from Bishop Peter

1. In September of 2019, Pope Francis declared that, from now on, the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time shall be designated as “Sunday of the Word of God.” He said: “A day dedicated to the Bible will help the Church experience anew how the risen Lord opens up for us the treasury of his word and enables us to proclaim its unfathomable riches before the world.”
2. Most people hear the Word of God proclaimed during the first part of the Mass.
 - a. Question: A French preacher once asked a congregation: If Jesus appeared to you holding in one hand the New Testament and in the other, the Most Holy Eucharist and asked you to choose either one, how would you respond?
 - Actually we need both. The New Testament tells us of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper and the Eucharist gives us the power to integrate into our lives what we have heard or read.
 - As an aside, when incense is used, the Eucharist and the Gospels receive the same attention.
3. **How important for us are the bible readings? "When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel"** (General Introduction to the Roman Missal, no. 29).
 - a. From our Bishops’ Conference: “... the Word of God proclaimed in the liturgy possesses a special sacramental power to bring about in us what it proclaims. The Word of God proclaimed at Mass is 'efficacious,' that is, it not only tells us of God and God's will for us, it also helps us to put that will of God into practice in our lives.”

- b. Also, a priest friend of mine says that reading the scriptures on our own or as a family is similar to receiving Holy Communion. The word of God can change our hearts if we are open to receiving it.
4. What about today's Gospel that emphasizes God's call to each of us as Jesus called the first Apostles and his demand that we repent of our sins and sinful ways. Here are some thoughts:
- a. Do I harbor grudges and do I want to take revenge? ("Vengeance is mine, says the Lord." Romans 12:19)
 - b. Do I deny climate change despite all the scientific evidence and the teaching of Pope Francis based on some of the world's leading experts in this area?
 - c. Do I believe that certain people should be executed – capital punishment - despite the teachings of the most recent popes?
 - d. Do I believe that the fetus, the most vulnerable human being, has a right to life?
 - e. Do I question the defense budget when resources could be more humanely used for housing for lower income people and the curbing of the plague of homelessness?
 - f. May Jesus who preached repentance and reconciliation give us the grace to open our hearts and say yes to him as did Peter and Andrew, James and John. If we do, we shall ultimately feel peace though in the beginning the process may be painful.
5. Now we come to our Eucharist. May Jesus ever present help us to discover him in his WORD so that we may become his true disciples. Thus we will be able to make a positive impact on our family members and society at large.

Amen.