

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (Year A)
1-18-2026 Homily.

I. Introduction

A university student who was having a hard time getting his act together decided to take out his frustrations on God, thereby excusing himself from his own failure to live out his faith. Going into the campus chapel, he sat down and said aloud, “Lord, You don’t seem to be paying much attention to what’s happening down here: violence, hatred, war, injustice, starvation, and the rest. All we seem to have are problems, and our leaders are either selfish or stupid, and they’ll never figure out how to solve or improve things. Heck, even I could make a better world than this one.” Somewhere deep inside him the young man heard God’s answer: “That’s what you’re *supposed* to do” (Gerard Fuller, *Stories for All Seasons*, p. 25).

We may be joking or ironic when we say “I could do a better job than the people running things now,” but God takes us seriously. In the 14th century a new bishop had to be chosen for the French city of Orleans, but none of the candidates were all that impressive. One of the onlookers, Blessed Roger LeFort, jokingly said, “I should put my name in for consideration; I’d make a better bishop than any of them.” To his dismay, someone in the crowd overheard him and exclaimed, “You’re right!” and began shouting “Roger for bishop! Roger for bishop!” This cry was taken up by the whole congregation, and he was elected bishop by acclamation (probably while thinking “Me and my big mouth”). Other saints were also chosen for a position of leadership in a similar manner, sometimes to their great surprise and reluctance. According to legend, St. Fabian—a layman who had a farm near Rome—was elected as the Church’s 20th pope when a blue dove landed on his head as he was entering the city; St. Donatus was chosen as bishop as a result of another heavenly sign: upon his arrival all the church bells began ringing, and all the lamps and candles were kindled, without human hands being involved. St. Ambrose, the civil prefect or mayor of Milan, was chosen by acclamation when a boy in the crowd—supposedly an angel—cried out “Ambrose, bishop!” To his great surprise and reluctance, everyone agreed, and he was chosen by acclamation.

Most of the time, however, God calls people in less dramatic ways—perhaps an idea that doesn’t go away, or a suggestion from someone else that strikes a deep chord in our hearts, or a feeling or inspiration that resonates within us—despite our own fears or feelings of unworthiness. If the Lord calls us to a certain mission or type of ministry, we may be tempted to respond, “Who, me? Lord, are You sure about this? Don’t You want to choose someone else?” However, as the saying goes, “God doesn’t call the qualified; He qualifies the called”—in other words, the Lord will give us the wisdom, strength, and abilities needed to fulfill our vocation or calling, even if we consider ourselves unsuitable or unworthy. As St. John the Baptist shows, an important part of our mission in life, whatever it may be, is pointing out to others the presence of Jesus in our world.

II. Development

Serving God’s people doesn’t happen by chance; the Lord prepares, calls, and appoints those He has chosen for this role. As St. John the Baptist said of Jesus, “The reason why I came baptizing with water was that He might be made known to Israel,” and in the 2nd

Reading St. Paul introduces himself to the Corinthians as one “called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.” The Lord commissions His servants and gives them the authority to speak and act in His Name. This was especially true of Jesus Himself; through the prophet Isaiah, the Father foretold or said to the Son in the 1st Reading, “I will make You a light to the nations, that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.” We know, of course, that Jesus came to save us from our sins, and for the last 2000 years He has chosen many specific men and women to bear witness to this truth—a process that continues today.

III. Conclusion

A Christian who worked as an elevator operator at a hospital in Nashville, Tennessee, was known as an effective evangelist who over the years led many people to Christ by his joyful smile and encouraging words. When someone complimented him about his success, he simply responded, “I’m just a nobody telling everybody about Somebody Who can save anybody.” That’s what it means to evangelize, or to point others to Christ. Someone else described evangelization as “one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread” (Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson’s Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, & Quotes*, p. 777). If Jesus has made a difference in our lives, the best way to thank Him—the way He Himself prefers—is to share our experience with others whenever the opportunity arises.

Would you say that our society and the larger world are in good shape, that the vast majority of people alive today are happy and at peace, and that everyone known to you either personally or by reputation is clearly on the path to personal holiness and eternal life? The answer to these questions is clearly negative—which means there are plenty of persons all around us needing to hear the Gospel—the Good News of salvation. We can’t respond to this urgent need by saying, “That’s the Church’s job”—for, through baptism, *we* are the Church, called and commissioned to bear witness to Jesus by our words, deeds, and example. You or I may be the only Gospel someone ever hears—which means that if we keep our faith to ourselves, one of God’s precious children may be lost for all eternity. Unfortunately, Catholics as a whole don’t do a good job sharing their faith—and the Lord wants this to change, starting with each one of us. We don’t have to wait for heavenly signs or official commissioning ceremonies to begin, and we mustn’t let ourselves be paralyzed by fear or shyness. A simple way to start is to pray: “Lord, give me some opportunity to witness to You today; help me recognize it when it arrives, and give me courage to speak and the right words to say.” Jesus will surely honor and answer a sincere prayer of this sort, giving us the chance to make a real difference in someone else’s life. Maybe a person with a real problem, or a lack of direction in life, will feel comfortable talking to us because of our Christian joy and compassion; perhaps our sincere expression of concern and support will touch the heart of someone who’s grieving; certainly our sacrifices and prayers for the spread of the Gospel and the conversion of sinners will be used by God to bring about small miracles of grace.

Jesus is the answer to our deepest human needs, but so many people today don’t notice or recognize Him, and thus are being led astray and are in danger of being lost eternally. You and I are called by the Lord to help change this—and only if we are willing to do this can we be certain of our own salvation.