

### **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, January 25, 2026**

Last Sunday looking at the example of St. John the Baptist about the necessity for all of us, as disciples of Jesus Christ, to give testimony. I said that sharing with others about our experience of God is something that flows naturally from the reality of being a disciple. It's not something reserved to you know, those who have public platforms or who are writing books or have international audiences. Sharing the testimony is part of what it means that the Church is a light to the nations, that we are sent into the world to bring the very light of Christ into every place. Well, I'm happy to say that today's Gospel, reaffirms what I said last Sunday, so, I must have been on the right track.

In this passage from Matthew 4, we see Jesus leaving His hometown of Nazareth to go to the region of Zebulun and Naphtali and to live in Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee. And St. Matthew explicitly states that this is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, which you heard in the 1st reading. *“Jesus Christ is the light, which has now arisen to shine on an evil dwelling in the darkness of sin and death.”* And St. Matthew goes on to report that the first words of Jesus as He began to preach, were *“Repent, for the kingdom of the heaven is at hand.”*

You may have noticed that the Church offers the option of omitting the next part that tells the story of Him calling the first disciples, Simon, Andrew, James, and John. You may have also noticed that when there's an option, I usually take the longer option because I believe that we need more of the Word of God not less. It would be especially ironic on a Sunday designated Word of a God Sunday, which today is, to cut the Gospel short. Anyway.

I also included the second part because it ties into the message of repentance. Repentance and discipleship are closely related. There

is no discipleship without repentance. If we are going to turn our hearts more and more to God, we have to turn our hearts more and more away from the sin and all that gets taken away of a stronger relationship with God. Repentance is not just about being sorry or feeling badly about our sins. Repentance also includes the exercising of our will - cooperating with God's grace to leave sin behind and not to take up a new sin to replace the ones we leave behind.

So, today we still need to hear Jesus' call to repentance. And it's uncomfortable. It's not always well received because we don't like anyone telling us that there's something wrong with us or that there's something that we have to change about ourselves. We like to think that we have our act together, that we're just right as we are. But we do need to hear that call, because we all struggle with sin, and we can all give our hearts even more than we have today to Jesus. We need to turn to the Lord more completely and more resolutely, more firmly.

Repentance is part of the story of our experience of God. That story that constitutes the testimony that we share. You remember last time I said the story or the testimony we shared doesn't have to be a story with all the fireworks and, you know, it doesn't have to be an elaborate story. It can simply be stories of ways that we have experienced God, whether that's landing a job that you wanted, or finding your spouse, or getting through a timely struggle. All these different ways we experience a nearness to God. Well, all that is good we should be sharing as part of the testimony, but repentance and conversion are also part of the story. And like I said last time, it doesn't have to be, you know, some big thing necessarily. Also, the same is true for telling about repentance and conversion. You know, there are certainly people out there who have shared tremendous

stories of conversion. I remember, years ago, decades ago, reading the story by Father Ken Roberts about his conversion, from a very dissolute life to essentially being reawakened in faith and becoming a priest. Or the story of Father Donald Calloway, another great story of conversion. Or you may have heard of sister Miriam, share about her story of a conversion. Lots of people who are out in the limelight, so to speak, a public stage are sharing stories of profound conversion.

But we don't necessarily have to have some sordid past and some major, major conversion in order to share a story about conversion or repentance how God has been at work in our life. We can simply share, in small ways, that we have experienced new hope and new life and goodness in life because God has been at work in these areas of struggle. You don't even have to share, really, any of the details of the struggle. You could refer to those things in general terms, but to share how God was at work in a place of struggle can really give hope to the person to whom you're speaking, because I guarantee they have a struggle of their own. And they're looking for hope. And they're looking for some reason to really believe that God can help them in that place of struggle. So, your sharing your testimony of how God has helped in this journey of repentance and conversion can really inspire the opening of someone's heart to receive favors and just to receive hope that God, with them in their struggle, can bring about a similar good ending.

Jesus goes walking by the sea of Galilee. He sees Simon and Andrew. He says to them, “*Come after me.*” But then there's a comma, not a period: “*Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.*” In other words, follow me, but I'm then going to send you out to make disciples. We know repentance was part of the story of Simon and Andrew, James, and John. Remember the story of the

miraculous catch of fish? What does Peter do? He falls down to the feet of Jesus and says, *'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.'* He's undergoing a conversion. All of Jesus' disciples undergo conversion. They don't all have the right character at the time Jesus calls them, or later, for that matter. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that they go out into the world, but I will bet you that they shared the story of their own conversion and how the working of God in their lives gave them strength for their struggles and made them better people.

So, as we continue to consider how we might share our testimony, what we might share, we are thinking not just of the experiences of God where we've had some great consolation, or witness a miracle or get lifted up in our hearts by the beauty of nature we are also considering how we might share what God has done in our work in work of overcoming different areas of sin in our life - strengthening us in different struggles. And you might also just today ask God for the grace humbly to share, even when it might be difficult, but humbly to share those stories of His working for conversation in our life and through that sharing we might bring more and more people to Himself.