

MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

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Mark 1:1-20

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Today is the first day of the first week of what is known as Ordinary Time. I have a friend who continually says that this cycle of the Church year is anything but *ordinary*. It is better called “The Time of Christ’s Teaching and Healing Ministry.” It is true, this is the focus we find in the Scriptures of these weeks. At the beginning of today’s Gospel, we hear “This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.” It is a clear directive from the beginning.

Let us look more closely at what this could mean for us today. There is the declaration that “the Kingdom of God is at hand.” What does this Kingdom involve? During the next 33 weeks of this of this season, we will find the answer. Today’s Gospel describes how Jesus *called* his first disciples. He took them right where they were, in everyday, ordinary circumstances and asked something new of them. These first four disciples happened to be fisherman, two sets of brothers, casting their nets into the Sea of Galilee, abundant with fish. If you have ever visited the Holy Land, you probably had a meal of fish from the Sea of Galilee.

From their natural and familiar environment, Jesus called them to something new. They did not know what that meant, but there was something, a power almost like a magnet, in that encounter with Jesus that drew them, to trust without much deliberation; they left their nets behind. They were able to leave the familiar, even their whole direction in life for something new. You will be “fishers of people,” something already familiar, to be fishers for these disciples. However, extending what they knew to something beyond – working instead with people: men, women, children, youth, elderly, Jews, Greeks, foreigners.

Like Mary, they may have wondered at some instant, “How is this to be done?” The answer is the same, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Most of us, as we look back at our own lives, see that we did things we never could have imagined. It was the Holy Spirit present, leading and guiding.

The **call of God**, which seems to be an important element of the Kingdom, comes to each of us who encounters Christ, the Messiah. We are drawn to him. Each one of us here present has known this in our own lives. You can all tell your unique individual beautiful story of how you came to be IHM; how you followed a specific career or ministry; how you changed your way of prayer, how you became involved with justice or a particular service. These were all calls. And, just because many of us are now in our elder years, and maybe more physically limited, God does not stop calling us anew.

Many of us are more recently growing in a cosmic sense of God, conscious of an evolutionary way that God works not only in creation, but in bringing about the fullness

of the Kingdom and, within us, as people, ever growing deeper in God's life, in a deeper consciousness. As we are more limited in body and what we are able to do physically, I believe the new call to each of us uniquely, is the call to become more deeply *what we have learned though our own life experiences*. All of us have had a life filled with successes and failures, joys and suffering. Most of us have had a call that brought with it the cross. What have we learned from our experiences? Who did I become, through it? Who is the person I want to be in a deeper way now, in light of those experiences? How is the Spirit leading me, in my everyday responses to the people around me? How do I respond to the situations of our world, to events such as we watched on TV this past week? God is calling us again, possibly to a deeper interiority, a deeper compassion, deeper prayer or presence, a more courageous witness to truth. Let us go out to the deeper waters where there is abundance. First, being aware of receiving God's love, living out of it, giving it, surrendering to what God calls me to now, in love. This is the work of Ordinary Time, listening, reflecting, healing ourselves and others. What is your specific call, now, at this time in your life?