

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – 21st January 2024 (Sunday of the Word)

| Headings | Gospel (Mark 1:14 20) | 1 st Reading (Jonah 3:1 – 5, 10) | 2 nd Reading (1 Corinthians 7:29 – 31) |
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| Context | Today is called the Sunday of the Word . Pope Francis invites Catholic to realise the importance of the Word of God in the liturgy and in personal prayer. St Luke tells us that after his resurrection Jesus appeared to two of his disciples as they walked along. ‘He opened their minds to understand the scriptures’. | Jonah (a Jew) was called by God to preach to the pagans of Nineveh. He tried to avoid it but in the end agreed. He was hoping they would not repent but they did. Jonah learned how narrow-minded he was compared to God (who is very merciful). | In this letter Paul answers questions put to him by Christians at Corinth. One question was about the value of being married or remaining single. Paul highlights the urgency of responding to God’s call. No matter what their situation is Christians should respond generously to this call. |
| Key verse | “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men”. | “And the people of Nineveh believed in God; they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least”. | “Those whose life is buying things should live as though they had nothing of their own; and those who have to deal with the world should not become engrossed in it”. |
| Key themes/ messages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus takes the initiative in calling the disciples, • It is evident that the disciples had confidence in Jesus because they said ‘yes’ without hesitation. • Jesus calls disciples in every generation – not necessarily those who are most gifted. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The story illustrates the mercy of God. God desires to have compassion on all he has created. • Here we see the power of repentance. No matter what the sin people can repent and be forgiven. • All are invited to trust in God’s mercy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul is aware of unhelpful speculation among his readers. His advice is avoid it. • He urges them to be detached from the things of the world – relationships, possessions etc. • The world will come to an end. Give priority to God’s call in your life. |
| Questions/ application to our lives | Have you experienced the call of Jesus to follow him? If so, did you respond without hesitation or did you look for assurances? Has Jesus ever opened your mind to understand the scriptures? If so describe the experience. Can you suggest steps your parish could take on the Sunday of the Word to bring the scriptures alive for members of the parish? | How would you explain to an unbeliever that God is merciful? Do you think there is anybody who is excluded from God’s mercy? Explain. Have you ever been surprised at people who turned to God when you didn’t expect it? Describe your surprise. | Paul was aiming to correct attitudes to marriage in the community at Corinth. If Paul were writing to Christians today what attitudes would he try to correct? Why should Christians (married or single) be detached from their present circumstances? (See v.31) |
| Further reading | Catechism 51, 53, 103, 104 | Catechism 1427, 1428, 1430 - 1432 | Catechism 1619, 1967, 1968, 1972 |

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