

**Homily; Third Sunday in Ordinary Time; Year B**

**The story is told about a child who told his teacher that his father is a magician who cuts people in half. When the teacher asked him if he was good at it, the boy answered: “Oh, yes! I have two half-brothers and two half-sisters!”**

**In today’s Gospel (Mk 1, 14-20), Jesus proclaims in clear terms his message: “The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel.” It is a clear call that requires a clear, not a half-hearted, response. The first disciples who heard the call left everything and followed Him.**

**True repentance is not just about being sorry for one’s sins. Rather, it is “metanoia,” a change or conversion of one’s ways, lifestyle, priorities and values. It is the realization and grateful acceptance of God’s unconditional forgiveness, and a decision to pay back the Lord for His goodness. Repentance is, in concrete, payback time!**

**Payback time can be triggered by the experience of blessings or pain. It could be a sincere and grateful response to God’s goodness and generosity, or a desperate surrendering to God who can help ease one’s pain, loneliness and sinfulness. In whatever way it comes, it is all made possible by God’s grace.**

**Payback time happens when we finally realize that we are living on borrowed time, and that we are just stewards, not owners, of our talents and possessions, and even of our very own lives. It is the acknowledgement that there is Someone greater than ourselves to whom we are accountable.**

**To follow something or someone implies a leaving behind of something or someone that is valuable or comfortable. It is not easy to sacrifice, to let go and to let be. Payback time is giving back to God what we love and value, and just trusting Him to take care of everyone and everything.**

**Those who are in payback time mode must constantly listen to God and be assured of His constant love because it is so easy to slide back to one's former and familiar ways. A text message I received says we must constantly hold on to these 10 daily reminders from God: "I will be with you; I will strengthen you; I will provide; I will answer you; I will give you rest; I will bless you; I will not fail you; I have a purpose for you; I have a plan for you; I love you!"**

**There is more that we have received than what we have worked for in life. Those who think otherwise will sooner or later realize the futility of their stand. Those who see life as a gift will end up grateful. Those who see life as an achievement could end up frustrated, or proud.**

**Today we know of more and more numerous lay Catholics who sacrifice time, treasure, and talent for the church. Think of the lay ministers, lectors, collectors, choir members, and yes, the various parish organizations like the outreach group who render their services. The most basic and effective form of being a "fisher" is through the TESTIMONY of Christian living. If people recognize a special "something," like genuine charity and joyful service, they might eventually be attracted to the Christian faith.**

**The British TV journalist Malcolm Muggeridge was a celebrity who did not care much about God and religion. He did something he swore he would never do – become a Catholic.**

**What led to his conversion? He had an assignment to write about the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Travelling to India, Muggeridge thought the trip was just the usual work but the amazing thing was in the course of his talks and days of observation of the kindly nun, he experienced a change of heart.**

**Muggeridge said: “Words cannot express how much I owe her. She showed me Christianity in action... She showed me how one loving person can start a tidal wave of love that can spread to the entire world.”**

**ASK YOURSELF: Would lukewarm and non-Catholics be edified by your way of life so that they, too, would want to become (better) Catholics? As a baptized Christian, you share in the apostolate of Christ as “fisher of men.”**

**So whether you are an accountant, a lawyer, clerk, doctor, musician, an executive, a teacher, a driver or whatever, you share in the apostolate of Christ as “fisher of men.”**

**What are you doing for your church? Are you just a Sunday Mass goer and that’s all? Can you do more to help the church’s various apostolates?**

**Ask not what your church can do for you; rather ask what you can do for your church.**