

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

January 15, 2017 A

Opening prayer: *Good and gracious God, you have called each of us by name from our mother's womb, consecrated us and commissioned us to be a light to the nations. Help us to become more deeply aware and responsive to your call. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Sharing life: What are you most and least grateful for this week?

Facilitator reads focus statement: Having completed the Advent/Christmas season, our Church year now moves to the Sundays in *Ordinary Time*. It is important that we do not look upon these Sundays as having lesser importance than the Sundays of the two great seasons of the year (Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter), since *every* Sunday celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus. *Ordinary Time* started last Monday, so this Sunday is the *Second Sunday* in Ordinary Time. This year, in this first section of Ordinary Time, we will have eight Sundays. This Sunday, all three readings speak about how we are *called, consecrated and commissioned* to do God's work.

If you had not read the commentary prior to your meeting, consider doing so before or after each Scripture reading.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

Isaiah writes the second of his *suffering servant* poems while in exile with his people. The identity of the servant is not clear. He is *called, consecrated and commissioned* to play a twofold role: 1) call Israel back to faithfulness to God and, 2) on a global level, be a light to the nations. In the gospels, we see that Jesus identifies very much with the servant and sees himself as *called, consecrated and commissioned* by God to gather in the lost sheep of the House of Israel and to be a Light to the nations of the world.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 40

The refrain to today's responsorial psalm, "*Here I am Lord, I come to do your will,*" underlines the importance of obedience in the life of God's servants.

SECOND READING: 1Corinthians 1:1-3

For the next eight weeks, the second reading will be from the first four chapters of Paul's First Letter to the church at Corinth. In these opening verses, Paul emphasizes how he and his readers and all the baptized have been *called and sanctified* by God to continue the work of Jesus.

GOSPEL: John 1:29-34

Like the *servant* in the first reading and Paul in the second reading, John the Baptist was also *called, consecrated and commissioned* to prepare people for the coming of the Messiah.

In this passage, John the Evangelist is addressing the disciples of John the Baptist who continue to believe that John the Baptist is superior to Jesus as he came before Jesus, and because Jesus submitted to being baptized by him (a matter which John the Evangelist has kept silent about). To respond to the faithful disciples of John who maintain their belief in his superiority, John the Evangelist has John the Baptist point to the superiority of Jesus. He does this in several ways. First, John identifies Jesus as the "Lamb of God." Second, John proclaims that Jesus existed before him: "*A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.*" Third, he states that it is Jesus on whom the Spirit comes, the same Spirit who tells John the Baptist that Jesus is the Chosen Son of God. In all of this, it is as if John the Evangelist is saying to the disciples of John the Baptist: "Look, it is John himself, your leader, who proclaims that Jesus is superior to him."

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. What verse, image or idea in the readings spoke to you most? Why?
2. "*Called, consecrated and commissioned* by God to do God's work"—what does this mean to you in your daily life?
3. Can you relate to the first stanza of the Psalm? If so, in what way?
4. "*Ears open to obedience you gave me.*" What kind of spiritual practices might help us to develop inner ears to hear and respond to God's Word?

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Name one way you can act on God’s Word in today’s readings. Suggestion: This week, reflect upon your baptismal challenge, having been *called, consecrated* and *commissioned* to do God’s work. Ask yourself how you are responding to this, your baptismal call.

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Pray for the grace to be more aware and responsive to the truth that you are *called, consecrated and commissioned* to do God’s work in your piece of his creation. As we approach the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, pray for women considering abortion at this time. Pray for the conversion of all who are pro-choice and pro-capital punishment. ©