

## GOSPEL

MARK 1:14-20

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. 'The time has come' he said 'and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.'

As he was walking along by the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net in the lake – for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you into fishers of men.' And at once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on a little further, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they too were in their boat, mending their nets. He called them at once and, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after him.

## A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

The Gospel today presents to us the beginning of Jesus' preaching ministry in Galilee. St Mark stresses that Jesus began to preach "after John [the Baptist] was arrested". Precisely at the moment in which the prophetic voice of the Baptist, who proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God, was silenced by Herod, Jesus begins to travel the roads of his land to bring to all, especially the poor, "the gospel of God". The proclamation of Jesus is like that of John, with the essential difference that Jesus no longer points to another who must come: Jesus is Himself the fulfilment of those promises; He Himself is the "good news" to believe in, to receive and to communicate to all men and women of every time that they too may entrust their life to Him. Jesus Christ in his person is the Word living and working in history: whoever hears and follows Him may enter the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is the fulfilment of divine promises for He is the One who gives to man the Holy Spirit, the "living water" that quenches our restless heart, thirsting for life, love, freedom and peace: thirsting for God. How often do we feel, or have we felt that thirst in

our hearts! He Himself revealed it to the Samaritan woman, whom he met at Jacob's well to whom he says: "Give me a drink" (Jn 4:7).

God, in becoming man, made our thirst his own, a thirst not only for water itself, but especially for a full life, a life free from the slavery of evil and death. At the same time by his Incarnation God placed his own thirst — because God too thirsts — in the heart of a man: Jesus of Nazareth. God thirsts for us, for our hearts, for our love, and placed this thirst in the heart of Jesus. Therefore, human and divine thirst meet in Christ's heart. And His disciples' desire for unity is part of this thirst. We find it expressed in the prayer raised to the Father before the Passion: "That they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). That is what Jesus wanted: the unity of all! The devil — we know — is the father of division, the one who always divides, always makes war, does so much evil.

May Jesus' thirst become ever more our own thirst! Let us continue, therefore to pray and commit ourselves to the full unity of the disciples of Christ, in the certainty that He Himself is at our side and sustains us by the power of his Spirit so that we may bring this goal closer. And let us entrust this our prayer to the motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church, that she may unite us all like a good mother.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- In what ways do you experience the Good News of the nearness and presence of the Kingdom of God in your life? What is such good news about the Kingdom?
- Jesus proclaimed repentance in order to enter the kingdom of God. What does this mean, what might you need to 'repent of' in order to experience the joy and good news of the Kingdom?
- The disciples 'left their nets' in order to follow Jesus. What are some of the things you may need to 'leave behind' in order to follow him more closely this year?

## PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer  
with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.