

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.

HOMILY OF ST JOHN PAUL II

27 January 1991, excerpt (translated)

"The time has come and the Kingdom of God is near; convert and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1, 15).

1. With these words, in a certain sense "programmatically", Jesus, after having received the Spirit in baptism and having been proclaimed by the Father as "Beloved Son", begins his ministry. They also contain, in summary, the entire evangelizing mission of Christ the Redeemer.

These words are simultaneously a proclamation and an invitation, which challenge man with urgency and strength. They proclaim, first of all, the definitive revelation in human history of the "Kingdom of God", which in the public manifestation of Christ became "close", within everyone's reach.

In fact, in Christ, in his saving words and gestures and above all in his death and resurrection, men can be saved and become participants and protagonists of the Kingdom, which will have its conclusion at the end of time.

Thus the ancient promises are fulfilled and all the expectations of men, who yearn for a more just and more fraternal world and for an encounter with God, Father and Savior, are fulfilled.

2. The conversion that Jesus demands is a true reversal, a passage from death to life, from servitude to sin to the service of God and brothers, from selfishness to love, from division to communion. It is a radical change that requires a profound and continuous change in mentality and behavior, inspired by the teaching of Christ and therefore by a "new" relationship with God and with our brothers.

All this means that the kingdom of God is not just a "gift" to be welcomed with faith, but it is a goal to be achieved and a commitment to be lived constantly. This requires docility to the Spirit and strong decision, indeed a sort of internal "violence" (cf. Mt 11, 12; Luke 16, 16), to go against the current; a continuous effort to measure and adapt to evangelical needs, translating them into a lifestyle.

The invitation to conversion also requires detachment from one's own selfishness and the abandonment of social securities and false idols that hinder the fulfillment of God's plan and man's conscious adherence. Above all, it asks for the following of Christ to enter into a relationship of friendship and communion with him and become his disciples and therefore witnesses and heralds of God's salvific plan.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What do you understand the "Kingdom of God" to be?



Heart: Where do you feel you most need to change in your "mentality and behaviour"?



Hands: In your life, what ways do you feel you are going against "the current"? Are there other areas in which you feel called to make a stand?

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. Offer 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 praying the 'Glory Be'.