

Commentary on the Readings for January 15, 2023

The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today we begin **Ordinary Time**, a season outside of any special liturgical celebrations or observances such as Advent, Christmas, Lent or Easter. During this time, the readings are generally of an instructional nature. Therefore, it behooves us to listen with our hearts as well as our ears. In the readings for today, God is calling each of us to service within His **Plan of Salvation**. All are called to participate! Even Jesus had a part in this divine Plan, the pivotal part, and He did not shrink away from it.

In the **First Reading**, from the *Prophet Isaiah (49:3-6)*, we hear how the Lord called upon the Prophet Isaiah to be His servant in preaching to the people of Israel and Judah toward the end of the 6th century BC. This was a time of sadness and despair after the Babylonian Exile ended and the people returned to the area around Jerusalem and found little of what they had left behind. In this message, God promises to "make you (the people of Israel) a light to the nations." This "light" was, and is, the Christ Child whose birth we have just celebrated.

The **Responsorial Psalm (40:2-10)** is based on a teaching from the First Book of Samuel (see I Samuel 15:22-23). The refrain comes from the Letter to the Hebrews (10:9) both referring to obedience to the will of God as being superior to all forms of exterior worship. We must keep in mind that our worship of our God must be in accord with His will, not ours.

The **Second Reading** is from *St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (1:1-3)* where he tells us that even he, Paul, and all the saints were called to be servants of God through Jesus Christ in bringing all mankind back to the Father — the ultimate goal of the Father's Plan. (*See Isaiah 49:5*)

In the **Gospel Reading**, from the *Gospel of John (1:29-34)*, we hear John the Baptist explaining why he is preaching: He is being obedient to the One who sent him to preach and baptize as a way of "making straight" or clearing a path that leads to Jesus Christ. By doing so, John becomes the first witness to the divinity of Christ. Have you ever thought about being a witness to Christ? It isn't easy and yet, it is most rewarding.

We, in western culture, are repelled by any thought of subservience; and yet without realizing it, we have become addicted to sports, shopping, food, and sometimes to people with strange messages and objectives. This is a form of subservience. At this time, the beginning of a new year, let us examine the direction our lives have taken and see what adjustments need to be made. Keep in mind that God's love for us calls us into a relationship where obedience and service are freeing and uplifting rather than restrictive or limiting. Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

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