

The Church of Saint Boniface

January 24, 2021

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time



"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."
Then they abandoned their nets and followed him.

(Mark 1 17-18)

UN-QUIET WORD FOR TODAY

Disciples are more than ‘good’ agents.

Occasionally all of us could use a good PR agent. Life itself perhaps might be so much easier with such an agent. Agents in the world of public relations, in media terminology, in the world of sports, entertainment and politics make the ordinary look extraordinary. A good agent knows how to blend criticism and put one in the good public eye. A good agent keeps one’s name in the best public light. A good agent knows the right places to be, the right people to associate with, the right clothes to wear, maybe even I, as a priest, might be better if I had a good agent?? (Make me look good!)

The message of this weekend’s readings is: those called to be disciples or prophets, those who want to proclaim the gospel, cannot be just ‘good agents’; they must be about something more. Discipleship is about practicing or being what you preach.

Jonah, in the initial stages of his prophetic ministry, saw himself just as a mere agent of God. He was a very reluctant prophet in particular to the City of Nineveh. Jonah was a Jew and a nationalist. The arch enemies of the nation of Israel were the Assyrians of Nineveh. Why even bother preach to them? Jonah fought with God about this. He does not see any-

**“Set out for the great city of Nineveh,
and announce to it the message that I will tell you.”**

(Jonah 3, 2)

thing good about ‘those’ people. Favor and goodness belonged only to Israel (so he thought). Hence why he fled away from God initially. Today he finally says yes and goes to Nineveh. In just but a day (in a city that took 3 days to walk), everybody changes and repents. Jonah is shocked and must repent, too. **God sends him as a ‘prophet’ of God’s plan, not his own. And it works. Jonah must realize that he is no agent, but more. He must now practice what he preaches too.**

In the Gospel, those called to be disciples are to be more than ‘surface’ followers of Jesus. Radical change is required of them. They are to remove everything that distracts them from being wholeheartedly disciples. This is seen in the ‘straightaway’ nature of their call. They abandon their livelihood and family immediately and follow Jesus. This is about total commitment to the Gospel and Jesus. No disciple can be ‘a sort of’ disciple.

We too are called to be today’s disciples/followers of Christ. We are not keepers of a brand or agents who make Jesus ‘look’ good. We are challenged to embody the message of Christ. Live as he lived. Love as he loved, suffer as he did for others. If God is about love then we, too, must be about that love. If God is justice then we, too, must exemplify that justice; if God is about serving others/neighbor then that is what we must do in our lives, too. We cannot be desktop Christians. We are more than agents. We must practice what we preach.

What will you change in you, in order to do this better?

— Father Anthony

MASS INTENTIONS

Jan. 28	8:00 AM	Morand/O'Malley Families , by Mary O'Malley
Jan. 30	4:00 PM	Yvonne Claire Reed (15th Anniversary), by Kerry Kimball
Feb. 4	8:00 AM	Families of those who have died in the pandemic , by Mary O'Malley
Feb. 5	8:00 AM	Jean Alves , by Robert & Kelly DiGeronimo
Feb. 6	4:00 PM	Louis Arruda (16th Anniversary), by his great-grandchildren
Feb. 7	8:00 AM	Jeanne Alves , by Robert & Kelly DiGeronimo
	10:30 AM	Michael Brisson (7th Anniversary), by his mother



CONDOLENCES

Our parish extends its deepest sympathy to the family of Theresa Maki who passed away on January 16, and to the family of Daniel Cronin who passed away on January 17. Please keep them in your prayers.

PRAY THE ROSARY every Saturday at 3:30 PM in the church, led by members of the Saint Boniface Knights of Columbus.

Tax Statements: Please call or email the parish office if you would like a 2020 Contribution Statement mailed to you.



For the month of February 2021, St. Boniface will receive a \$1 donation from each purchase of the \$2.50 reusable Fight Hunger Bag at the Hannaford store located at 333 Mass Ave., Lunenburg. Funds will be used toward our parish support of food and supplies for the Northstar Family Shelter.



SAINT BONIFACE PARTNERS IN CHARITY 2021

Our goal for this year is \$22,500 — we have so far raised \$11,320 (over half way there!). Thank you for your support.

Envelopes are available at church entrances, which you can mail with your donation or drop in our collection basket. You can also visit the Parish website to donate online, or text the word DONATE to 84576.

COLLECTION REPORT

January 17	
– Sunday Offering	\$ 1,956
– Maintenance	175
– Fuel	412
Total	\$ 2,543

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Give to our parish whether you're in the pews or not! Many parishioners have been making their weekly offerings online. It's secure, convenient and easy to make one-time or recurring donations at www.stboniface-lunenburg.org



The Saint Boniface Knights of Columbus are sponsoring a diaper drive throughout the month of January to support CareNet Pregnancy Resource Center of Fitchburg. Donations of diapers, baby wipes and formula may be placed in front of the statue of Saint Joseph by the pulpit. Thank you for your generosity and support.

CARENET.
Pregnancy
Resource Center
of North Central Massachusetts, Inc.

Facing Fear with Jesus: PPE for the Soul

We face many fears: sickness and death from a worldwide pandemic, job, and financial loss, loneliness, and radical changes in our society. We need PPE (personal protective equipment) for our souls and emotions. Explore eight concrete tips from the Bible, the Saints, and our Catholic Faith. The session includes prayer, reflection, small group sharing, and talks. Speakers: John and Therese Boucher, Catholic teachers of adults and authors. To be held on Saturday, Jan. 30 from 9:15-11:30 pm. FREE REGISTRATION (limited spaces available)! Register by email by Thursday, Jan. 28 with your name, email, and phone number to Esperanza Oliveras at cje21@verizon.net, to receive the Zoom.com video session link.

(Hosted by the Parish Renewal and Evangelization Committee, Diocese of Worcester)

No Greater Challenge

The kingdom of God is near! The time is short! Reform your lives, just as the people of Nineveh turned from their evil way. Leave behind your attachment to possessions and security, and come follow Jesus.

There is much for which we have to repent: poverty, hunger, homelessness, discrimination, war, the destruction of the earth and the wasting of its resources.

Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed.

The Christian believes what Paul wrote, that the world as we know it is passing away. Ahead lies the kingdom of God, and each of us must choose between solidarity with a world headed for destruction and solidarity with a world ruled by God.

Things can change for us, as they did for Nineveh when they believed God, who shows sinners the way and guides the humble to justice.

No greater challenge or higher priority can be imagined than the development and perfection of a theology of peace suited to a civilization poised on the brink of self-destruction.

U.S. Bishops
The Challenge of Peace
1983: 230

— Gerald Darring

Saints of the Week

January 25.

CONVERSION of SAINT PAUL

Saint Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus was to be the turning point in his spiritual life. There he met Jesus and nothing was the same after that. Thereafter, all his zeal and energy were focused on the spread of the gospel message. We know him from his wonderful letters to the early Christian communities.



January 26.

SAINTS TIMOTHY and TITUS

Saint Timothy and Saint Titus were trusted friends and co-workers with Saint Paul through many of his trials. He eventually set both up as heads of local Churches and encouraged them as would a father. Saint Paul seems to have truly relished their support and friendship. *Saints Timothy and Titus are the patron saints of stomach disorders.*



January 27.

SAINT ANGELA MERICI

Saint Angela Merici was a courageous woman who saw a need and answered it even though society may not have been ready for her solution. Women teaching and, what we call today, a secular institute were new forms of living and ministering which proved very beneficial to the Church.



January 28.

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Saint Thomas Aquinas is well known for his writings, especially the "Summa Theologica." But he was far more than a philosopher/theologian. He was a devout man who wrote beautiful prayers and hymns. Perhaps the best known is the "Pange Lingua." He truly was able to combine human reason and revelation and show the fruits of the union. *Saint Thomas Aquinas is the patron saint of Catholic schools and students.*



January 29.

SERVANT of GOD BROTHER JUNIPER

Servant of God Brother Juniper was a simple man who joined Saint Francis in the earliest days of the Order. While Saint Francis praised him and wished he had a "whole forest of such Junipers," nevertheless, he could be exasperating for his generosity. Even saints can be frustrating.



A Common Venture

Today's reading from Mark presents a version of how Jesus recruited his first followers that differs from the version reported by John (see last Sunday's reflection).

Jesus and the Baptist

Scholars believe that after his baptism, Jesus became a disciple of John, preaching his message of repentance and baptizing others (see Jn 3:22). Over the course of time, Jesus began to discover a new ministry for himself. According to Mark, Jesus embarked upon it after John was arrested (Mk 1:14).

The theme of Jesus' preaching is quite similar to that of the Baptist's: "the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mk 1:15). Jesus invites his listeners to give undivided loyalty to God whose definitive reign is about to begin.

Jesus Recruits His Faction

Modern believers are amazed that the people Jesus invites to join him seem to drop everything and follow him immediately. It is all the more amazing if this is the first time they have met each other.

Cultural background and information shed light on the story. It is highly likely that Jesus and the four followers he summons here are not strangers. If they have not personally met each other before this time, they were aware of **each other's aspirations and objectives**. News travelled quickly in the ancient world thanks to gossip networks.

Jesus the artisan moves from Nazareth, an insignificant village, to Capernaum, a hub of activity on the Sea of Galilee at the crossroads of major highways. His presence and activity stir curiosity and become the topic of gossip. He does not seem to have gone there to seek work. Instead, he appears to be seeking people to join him in a common venture.

Gathering a following is a common occurrence in the Mediterranean world. Technically, a group that gathers for **a specific purpose for a limited time is called a "coalition."** The coalition that Jesus gathers is technically called a **"faction" because it focuses on a central person who holds and controls the loyalty of the group.** Invariably, the faction leader has a grievance and gathers around him others who share the grievance.

What were the grievance and the aspirations, objectives, **and hopes of the fishermen who joined Jesus' faction?** These are never spelled out. The facts, however, that Jesus was known as the son of an artisan and that these first four members of his group were fishermen make it probable that they found common cause in the oppressive difficulties of their daily lives. Such experiences would be **the underpinning for Jesus' broader project of proclaiming the reign of God, the authentic patron or father of Israel.**

In societies where central government is weak, people develop more reliable ways of meeting their needs. Patronage is such a system in the Mediterranean world. People with means (patrons) are expected to help those with less or no means (clients). Many refused to play the role of patron (Lk 12:15-21) prompting Jesus to point to God as the only reliable patron for Israel.

Jonah and Zebedee had to hire more day laborers to replace their sons who followed Jesus. They calculated that this short-term gamble might improve their lot if Jesus could deliver what he promised.

Western believers like to romanticize Jesus' call of his first followers. Cultural insights demonstrate that issues of livelihood were at stake. What real-life issues in America prompt people to follow Jesus with undivided loyalty?

— John J. Pilch



Mass and Holy Hour for Life

All are invited to attend the annual Mass for Life on Thursday, Jan. 28, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. Paul, 19 Chatham St., Worcester.

A special Holy Hour for Life will follow at 7:30 p.m. Celebrant will be Fr. Richard Reidy, Vicar General. Please join us on the eve of the March for Life as we remember the 48th tragic anniversary of Roe v. Wade and pray for an end to abortion and the conversion of our nation. All are welcome!

"This is the time of fulfillment.
The kingdom of God is at hand."

(Mark 1:15)



The New Age: 2000 Years Old

The language of this Sunday's Gospel could not be more fully packed. In two brief verses, Mark summarizes the ministry and preaching of Jesus, and in five he captures the call and response of the first disciples. The result is not a set of photos but a group of icons, indeed a triptych.

Panel one: After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: **"This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel"** To people steeped in the language of the Hebrew prophets, **"the good news [Godspel] of God"** could mean only one thing: the announcement of the coming of God in saving power.

What did it signify to peasants of early first-century Galilee when they heard an itinerant craftsman proclaim that the kingdom of God was at hand? If you think of God as the king of the universe, is not the divine reign always **"at hand"**? Where was the **"news"** in such an utterance? What we post-modern Westerners need to know is that, in enlisting this kingdom-coming metaphor, Jesus was drawing upon language that was part of current-day apocalyptic writing.

A Hebrew apocalypse, of which the book of Daniel is our handiest example, saw history divided into **"the present age"** and **"the age to come."** Typically, **"the present age"** was seen as a moment when the king of kings, the Lord, allowed lesser, earthly kings (Nebuchadnezzar or Caesar or whomever) to have their temporary sway; but in **"the age to come"** the regency of King God would be displayed, the just would be rescued, the unjust duly punished.

In other words, the kingdom of God would be clearly manifested and recognized in this fresh intervention of the one who always reigns as king. For many contemporaries of Jesus, such a coming of the kingdom meant the defeat of the Roman occupation. As Jesus used the image, it meant something else even more exciting—a new healing and freeing access to God already to be tasted in

his own ministry. The clue that Jesus is talking apocalyptic is the phrase **"the time has been fulfilled"**—"the time" being **"the present age."** So the statement is not a declaration of a perennial truth but truly an announcement of news. It is news that is so good that it demands the response of *metanoia*, a change of heart, a whole new orientation. This announcement is a pointing to an unexpected prize, God's long-awaited intervention for the permanent rescue of all who will receive it.

And why does the evangelist introduce this summary of Jesus' Galilean preaching with the ominous reference to the arrest of John the Baptist? For two reasons, apparently: first, the removal of the Baptizer clears the deck and indeed **calls for Jesus' entry into Israel's life as John's successor.**

Second, and more significantly, the reference to John's arrest (which necessarily recalls his fate of capital punishment) **prepares the reader for the fact that Jesus' proclamation of the good news will result in his own death at the hands of Israelite and Roman officials.** Indeed, the crucifixion will eventually be gathered into the heart of the post-Easter proclamation of the same good news.

What the proper response to this *Godspel* entails is acted out in the two panels of the triptych that follow. Simon and Andrew allow the Lord Jesus to interrupt their workday; they drop their nets and follow immediately. Then the response of the Zebedee brothers to the same call is told in a way that highlights their letting go of everything—nets, boat, co-workers, even their father. The message? Responding to the good news of God's fresh intervention entails letting go of one's conventional tasks and attachments and following Jesus.

The new task is described as "fishing people." Joining Jesus' enterprise means participating in a restoration. But first comes the letting go. Response to the *Godspel* of the new age means conversion—if not literally dropping a net, at least doing the old job in a new way.

Saint Boniface Church

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Parish Office Hours

Monday / Wednesday / Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (closed 12:00 – 1:00 PM)

The Celebration of the Eucharist

Sunday: 8:00 AM, 10:30 AM, 6:00 PM

Saturday Vigil: 4:00 PM

Summer Sunday Mass schedule: 9:00 AM
(Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend)

Weekday Masses: 8:00 AM, Wednesday/Thursday/Friday

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (Confession) Saturday 3:00 - 3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM Adults are baptized at the Easter Vigil as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Infant and child Baptisms are by arrangement.

FIRST EUCHARIST Preparation begins in grade one and includes classes, retreats, and home instruction. Children receive First Eucharist in grade two.

CONFIRMATION Our Confirmation program begins in the 9th grade; students are confirmed in the spring of the 10th grade. For young adults who have been baptized but not yet confirmed, contact the parish office.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY It is the policy of the Diocese of Worcester that a couple should contact the parish at least one year prior to the anticipated date of their wedding to allow sufficient time to carry out the various steps of the marriage preparation process. It is important that arrangements be made with the church before plans are made with reception halls, caterers, etc.

ANNOINTING OF THE SICK Please call the parish office 978-582-4008 or email Fr. Anthony at stbonifaceparish@verizon.net or Nancy Cieri 978-582-6983 nancycieri@comcast.net to arrange these visits.

PRAYER LINE MINISTRY If you or someone you know needs prayers or if you would like to be a part of this ministry of those who pray for the needs of neighbors, please contact Sue Cote 978-582-0404 sj33@msn.com.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #16480 *In Service to One. In Service to all.* Members meet in the Parish Hall on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 PM. Any Catholic men over 18 who are interested in joining the Knights should contact Grand Knight Peter Bak (978-403-5119) or Deputy Grand Knight Claude Poirier (978-660-3202), or email kofc16480@gmail.com.

PARISH STAFF:

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Newcomers to St. Boniface are invited and encouraged to formally register as members of the parish so that we may stay in touch with you with faith formation news, notices of special events, volunteer opportunities, and more.

Registration forms are available at the doors of the church, the parish office, or on our website.

Please note that you must be registered for at least six months before we can issue any verification of your status as a parishioner for godparent or sponsor letters.

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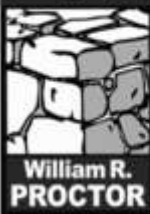
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