



January 18, 2026

Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

"I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:6

Dear Friends,

A college student was having a difficult time navigating university life. So, he decided to take his frustrations out on God. He went into the chapel, sat dawn, looked heavenward and said, *"All we have on this earth are problems and a bunch of dummies who will never figure out how to solve them. They just take care of themselves. Even I could make a better world than this one."* From deep down within him the student heard God's answer: *"That's what you're supposed to do."*

Many people are looking for a magical character to solve the world's problems, like a marvel comic strip hero. Too willingly we hand over our freedom to someone who claims to have the power to take care of everything for us. All we have to do is passively sit back. We don't have to question, search for the truth, struggle with the complexity of reality, we just have to repost the meme's on our social media feeds.

Christianity calls us to embrace the real world. We do not look for magic. Scripture scholar, Sr. Dianne Bergant CSA, writes; *"Ours is a historical religion. It not only unfolds within the joys and disappointments of time and place but is rooted in actual events that took place in the lives of real people. The Christ to whom we commit ourselves is not a mythic character, a figment of communal religious imagination. He is someone who was born into history... He was known by real people like John the Baptist...He had followers who testified to the truth of both his existence and his life. If we are to be Jesus' disciples, we too must learn to be mindful of the sacredness of our own history...the followers of Jesus always return to the events of his life in order to discover the meaning of the events in their lives. These past events are reinterpreted in the ongoing present. Discipleship is never otherworldly."*

What this means is we are going to meet God in the people and workings of our daily lives. We don't retreat to the past to encounter God but find God in the present. The past events of our faith history are a type of measuring stick by which we can judge the present. For example, our passage from Isaiah comes from a very difficult period in his people's history. They had seen the destruction of their nation. Many were scattered; others were carried off to exile in a foreign land. Isaiah recalls how when their people were held captive in Egypt, God led them to freedom. And God will do it again, but this time not just lead them out. They will be a sign of hope for all nations.

Paul was facing his own challenges in our reading from Corinthians. The challenge he faces is his interpretation of the gospel for a new moment in history. The gospel is not just a Jewish phenomenon. There are large numbers of Gentiles finding faith in Jesus. Paul does not merely repeat what he has heard. But because of the holiness of his present moment with the Corinthians, Paul reinterprets the message of their unique time.

In our Gospel from John, John the Baptizer admits that he did not know his cousin Jesus very well. Yet his experience at the baptism of Jesus moves him to see something he had missed before, the presence of God in Jesus. That personal experience moves him to be a witness to the new things that God is working. Our own time calls us to new challenges in proclaiming the gospel. Like John the Baptist we need to let our experience of Jesus in others lead us to creatively apply our faith to this sacred moment in our own history where God speaks.

Peace,

Fr Ron

Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: www.anne.church