



SAINT JOHN HENRY NEWMAN PARISH

Heart Speaks to Heart

Briggsville | Buffalo | Montello | Pardeeville | Portage | Westfield

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

Psalms 40

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

John 1:29-34

Introduction to the 2nd reading

1. For the next five weeks (until Lent) Mother Church has us with the first 2 chapters of this letter to the Corinthians.
2. Corinth itself had a minimum of 80,000 people and yet the Christian population at most had 60-80 people. Thus, less than .01% of the population.
3. It always amazes me that the gospel even made it out of the first century.
What was it about the life of the Christians that made their witness so attractive?
4. Corinth itself was a hub of activity, located on a major sea and land route that offered commerce, trade, money, bartering and certainly a plethora of religious cults, from that of the Greek gods (Apollo and Aphrodite), a Roman imperial cult, Judaism, pagan philosophy and much more.
5. Paul is forming a people who must learn to live from a different center or foundation than that of the Corinthian culture. In a city obsessed with self-creation, Paul begins by saying: you did not make yourself, you were made, named and claimed by God.
6. These first three verses have Paul reminding or instructing them that their dignity comes not from Corinth but from Christ

Transition line:

Listen now to how Paul greets a Church learning who they are before they learn what to do.

Corinth's instinct

Make a name for yourself
Your work proves your worth
Choose your own path
Local prestige

Paul's opening counter

"church of God"
Already sanctified
Called to be holy, "lead me where you need me"
United with all who call on the name of the LORD

*Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
and Sosthenes our brother,
to the church of God that is in Corinth,
to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy,
with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
their Lord and ours.
Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Homily

Homily: Lower, Slower, Weaker

In just a short time, the Winter Olympics will capture the attention of the world. Hosted in Italy, nearly 3,000 athletes from close to 100 nations will gather to compete at the highest level. Each has trained for years with one goal in mind: to stand on the platform, to receive a medal, to be recognized as the best.

Since 1894, the Olympic motto has summed up that pursuit: *Citius, Altius, Fortius*—**higher, faster, stronger**. Records are broken. Limits are pushed. The podium is climbed.

But for us as followers of Jesus, the platform we aim for is not a podium.
(gesture to the crucifix)
It is the cross.

That is why, for centuries, Catholic churches have placed the crucifix front and center. It is our point of reference. Our definition of victory. Our gold medal.

The world applauds athletes by climbing. *Higher, faster, stronger*
Christ forms saints by descending. *Lower, slower, weaker*

Lower.

To say “lower” is to remember.
In Isaiah, the servant says”.

*“the Lord formed me from the womb....
You are my servant Israel, through whom I show my glory.*

Before the servant does anything, he belongs.

To live “lower” is to remember:
I did not make myself. I was made, named, and claimed- known by God even before my mother knew my face.

Slower.

John the Baptist does not rush. He waits. He watches. And when Jesus finally comes, John does not promote himself—he points away from himself.

Slower is the discipline of attention.

It is a prayer that teaches me to listen before I speak, to receive before I act.

It is a growing commitment to spend the first 1% of your day (15 minutes) with silence, with the scripture. Will you slow down enough and have the first hour of your day filled with some silence before you allow the noise of the world, social media, news feeds and such to

Slower prayer teaches me to trust God more than my plans, His will more than my control.

Over time, my prayer changes from “lead me where I want to go” into the deeper surrender: “**Lead me where You need me.**” A slowed-down life becomes a witness—quiet, steady, and credible.

Weaker.

And then John says the line that changes everything:

“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

Not the lion. Not the warrior. The Lamb

Power wrapped in weakness. Victory through sacrifice.

Weaker means returning often to the crucifix.

It is the courage to believe that God’s power does the real work.

God saves the world not by strength, but by self-gift.

As Paul will say, “God chooses what is weak in the world to shame the strong”

Corinth had almost no Christians—yet their witness spread like fire. Not because they were impressive, but because they lived from a different wisdom.

They belonged before they performed.

They trusted the cross more than success.

The world may chase higher, faster, stronger.

But the saints are formed—here—

lower, slower, weaker.

And from that platform—the cross—Christ still takes away the sins of the world.