

**Homily January 21-22, 2017 – 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**How Do we Come Together as One People and Become Disciples of Jesus?**

Friday was the inauguration of the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. Now that the President has been inaugurated, we all need to come together as a united people of God working in unison to continue to build and grow this great nation of ours.

Nations being divided is not a new phenomenon. As you heard in today's second reading, in the Church of Corinth the early Christians were divided into many factions. Those following Paul, those following Apollos, those following Cephas (Peter), and those following Christ. St. Paul states, "I urge you brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose."

Just as in the time of St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, today we also need to be united in the same mind and same purpose. And what is that purpose you may say? As St. Paul said, that purpose is to come together as one body of believers in Christ Jesus. As Christ himself stated in today's Gospel, we need to repent ... "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The English word repent is translated from the Greek word 'metanoia' which means a profound change of heart away from sin. Christ two thousand years ago used these words to call people to conversion. These same words are just as important for us to hear today as they were then. We all need to repent and turn away from sin.

As we heard in today's Gospel reading, Christ started preaching in Galilee. In those times, Galilee was one half Gentile (or non-Jewish) and one half pagan. Christ started his public ministry in an area of the world where many of the inhabitants were in darkness towards God, as was foretold in Isaiah. "...The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light..." Darkness in those days was interpreted as being without God or away from God. Christ was the great light to the people that was mentioned in Isaiah; an area of the world where many people did not even follow the Jewish faith tradition.

With God's grace, Christ's followers back then were able to turn away from sin and turn towards God. Just as in those days, sin divides us. Sin conquers us. Sin makes all of us, myself included, turn away from God and has us look towards others with a hardened heart. We all need to break our bonds to sin, hard as it may be. With the help of the sacrament of reconciliation we too can also turn away from sin through the grace of God.

One way we can break our bonds of sin is to more closely follow Jesus and become true disciples or followers. Just as Peter, Andrew, James, and John dropped all that they had and

followed Jesus when He asked them in today's Gospel reading, we need to do the same today. Those first disciples left everything behind; their livelihood, their families, everything that they knew, and followed Jesus. Many of them were fishermen. Fishing in that time was a very prosperous industry, so those first followers of Christ truly left everything behind. Jesus today continues to ask us to follow Him. I don't think he necessarily wants us to leave our jobs and families to follow Him, but he does indeed want us to follow him, in thought, in word, and in actions.

What does following Jesus really mean? Does it mean giving up all of one's possessions to follow Him? No it does not; but it does mean that we should give up our sins and live a more faith filled and faithful life. A life that shows through our actions, by that I mean what we do for others for their sake, not for our own credit, are more powerful than our words. Through the sacrament of Baptism we are all called to follow Jesus and become one of his disciples. We need to listen carefully and quietly to what God is calling us to do as a disciple of Christ.

God is calling each and every one of us to a life rooted in Christ. One which is more open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. We are all not called to Holy Orders like bishops, priests, or deacons; but we are all called to a vocation in our lives. Our vocation could be a vocation to consecrated life, a vocation to marriage, or a vocation to the single life. Each and every one of these vocations is different, but they all call us to holiness. We are all called to become better Christians. What is God calling you to do for his kingdom on Earth today? Are you listening? Or is God's whisper crowded out by the noise of today's secular society?

We all make New Year's Resolutions each year, such as to lose weight (I have made this one myself). Can we make one of our resolutions for 2017 to become a more faith filled and faithful follower of Christ? Can each one of us resolve to spend one additional hour a week in prayer (that is less than 9 minutes a day or less than one coffee break daily)? Can we resolve to work together to build up God's church on earth? Perhaps all that we need to do is smile and say hello to a fellow parishioner or someone you meet on the street. Let's all try to resolve in 2017 to do one small act of kindness for God's glory, each and every day of the year and to also resolve in this New Year to be open to receive the graces God has waiting for you. You may be surprised where God leads you this year. Let Him lead and then joyfully follow.

Amen

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