

Homily – Mark 1: 14-20
3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
Word of God Sunday
23rd / 24th January 2021 Sooeey/ Riverstown

Ben-Hur, a 1959 American religious epic film, is considered one of the best movies in the history ever, and even recognized by the Vatican. Though it is about the tale of Christ, Jesus appears very little in the movie. But, one of the beauties of this movie is this, that the personality of Jesus is very powerfully depicted in it. They do not show the face of Jesus in this movie; instead only the back side or the far view of Jesus.

Now, there is a touching scene in this film: The thirsty slaves are begging for water and the officer in-charge denies water to one particular slave shouting: “No water for him”. The weary slave falls to the ground praying: “God, help me”. And then there appears Jesus bringing him water. Seeing this, the task master comes shouting at Jesus: “I said no water for him”. But as he got near to Jesus, he was dumbfounded. Yes, he could only stand there in silence with reverence and fear when he looked into the face of Jesus. The person of Jesus mesmerized the soldier.

Well, in the Gospel of today, we see this same Jesus mesmerizing his first followers. And the invitation of Jesus to his disciples is so beautifully narrated by Mark in Chapter 1, verses 16 to 17, and therein he writes the following: "As Jesus was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and his brother Andrew, casting a net in the sea; for they were

fishermen. And He said to them, 'Follow Me, and, I will make you into fishers of men.'

Well, when Jesus invited Simon and Andrew, and James and John to join Him and help in His preaching and healing ministry, they were so taken up by the One who invited them that they promptly accepted His call; for discipleship is the only complete response a believer can make to that invitation. And the two greatest aspects of discipleship in Mark are: 'being with Jesus and sharing in His mission'. Disciples are invited to be with Jesus on a great spiritual journey and to share in Jesus' mission of proclaiming God's Kingdom in word and deed. And in describing the call of Jesus' first disciples, today's Gospel also emphasizes how we are to respond to God with total commitment, abandoning our accustomed attitudes and styles of life.

And furthermore, When Jesus said, "I will make you fishers of men," He was in fact saying, "I will take you, with your personality, your background, your testimony, your influence and I will use you to catch people and bring them into my family."

Remember dear friends! Every one of us is called by God. And, the mission of preaching, teaching and healing which Jesus began in Galilee is now the responsibility of each of us in the Church: be we religious, priests, married or single people, we are all called, and in this call we become what God wants us to be.

Dr. Doren Edwards, a surgeon in Erin, Tennessee, United States, tells of a patient of his, Blanche Bennet, whose alcoholic husband had an untimely death. She had two children and they were giving her constant trouble. Finances were tight, and life was getting very hard for her.

Now, Blanche wasn't a Christian. And one day, she came to see Dr. Edwards with her physical ailments, and she was diagnosed having cancer, with multiple organs involved. No treatment could save her, and Blanche had turned very bitter. Dr. Edwards, a staunch believer, wanted to talk to her about Jesus Christ, but she wouldn't let him share his witness. However, she did accept a small copy of the New Testament.

A few weeks later, the doctor learned from the Newspaper obituary that Blanche had died. He sent a card to the family, expressing his deepest sympathies. Now, having received his card, Blanche's daughter called him and she had this request to make: "Could you please send us a Bible, like the one you gave to our mother?". We found our Mama a totally changed person during her last days. She was no longer bitter, she wasn't afraid to die, and she said something to us about knowing Jesus. And it was her wish that the Bible be placed in her hand at her burial. Now, would you please send us a Bible so that we too can look for and find what Mama found in that book?"

Well, dear brothers and sisters, God calls us in many different ways and at many different times along life's journey. It might be sometimes a call to follow Him closely as a priest, a

religious or a deacon. Or He may be asking us to remain His true followers on our own streets, to our own families and in our own communities. How amazing it would be if we are able to pay heed to that invitation of God, recognizing His voice and discerning His will for us?

The first disciples were mesmerized by the power of Jesus' invitation. And today, this same God captivates each of us with his invitation. Saint St. Augustine who was fascinated by the power of God late in his life writes in his autobiography: "Late have I loved Thee". Of course, it is better to be late than never, but I suppose, it is still better to be now, than late. God bless you all, **Amen.**