

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

JANUARY 25, 2009

JON 3:1 – 5, 10:1; I COR 7:29 – 31; MARK 1: 14 – 20

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“I have good news for you!” These words make us pay attention. We listen more closely. We feel expectant.

In today’s Gospel we see Jesus entering Galilee where his cousin, John the Baptist, had just been arrested. Undoubtedly, John’s disciples and others felt fearful and troubled. Then, Jesus arrives. He says: “Believe in the gospel. . .Believe in the good news.” Those who listened, listened closely and they felt expectant. Good news does this to us.

Those who believed the good news that Jesus taught were transformed. Among the greatest examples of how the Gospel changes lives is the experience of four fishermen who are introduced to us in today’s Gospel. We know their names well: Peter, Andrew, James and John. We are amazed at how quickly they put down their nets to follow Jesus. Today we do not remember these four Galileans for being fishermen; we celebrate them for being apostles--followers of Jesus who joined his great mission to tell others the Good News.

The mission of announcing the Good News was the heart of Jesus’ ministry. The call to spread the Gospel is the greatest work of the Church. The task of becoming Good News for others is the goal of every Christian. There are many ways to teach the Gospel, to announce the Good News, but one way holds a special place in the Church in our country--the Catholic school.

On this Sunday when the Gospel presents Jesus announcing the Good News to others, the Church in the United States begins the celebration of Catholic Schools Week. Why are Catholic schools so special? Every day across our land thousands of children and young people step into schools that proudly call themselves faith communities centered in Jesus Christ. In our Catholic schools the Good News is taught in daily religion classes where thousands of teachers--today’s band of apostles--use creative methods to apply the Word of God to the realities and problems of our time. In our Catholic schools thousands of young people embrace the call to Christian service, putting into practice Jesus’ message of the Beatitudes. In our Catholic schools students and teachers, joined as faith communities, regularly gather for Eucharistic celebrations and daily prayer.

Today is a wonderful moment to announce with pride and joy: I have good news for you! The teachings of Jesus are making a difference in the lives of thousands of young people. Dedicated teachers, the apostles of our time, are announcing the Good News every day in hundreds of classrooms as they strive to teach as Jesus did. Parents are sacrificing so that their children may receive formation in Gospel values alongside academic instruction.

For the good news that our Catholic schools are announcing the Gospel message and teaching young people how to follow Jesus, we celebrate and give thanks to God!