

Jesus said to them, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Then they left their nets and followed him.
Mark 1

First Week of Ordinary Time: January 13 - 19, 2013

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First Week of Ordinary Time

Sunday is the **Baptism of the Lord**. We hear the Lord say in the first reading from **Isaiah**, “Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit.” Those words are echoed in the reading from **Luke's Gospel**, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

This feast marks the end of the **Christmas season** and on Monday we begin **Ordinary Time** on the Church calendar. The term Ordinary doesn't mean that the life of the Church is ordinary but that it is *ordinal* or “counted.” We mark our liturgical year by counting 34 weeks of Ordinary Time, interrupted only by the Lent/Easter seasons. When the liturgical year ends in November with the 34th Week in Ordinary Time, it is followed by the First Week in Advent.

Thursday is the **Memorial of Saint Anthony, Abbot**.

During this first week in Ordinary Time, we begin a four week cycle of weekday readings from the **Letter to the Hebrews**. This is the longest letter to any community in the New Testament.

For the next four weeks, until the beginning of Lent, the weekday gospels are from **Mark's Gospel**. This week Mark offers us a look at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Monday he calls his first disciples: Simon and Andrew, John and James. He drives out evil spirits, heals the sick and forgives sins to the skepticism of the scribes. The week ends as Jesus extends an invitation to the despised tax collector, Levi/Matthew “Follow me.”

Daily Prayer This Week

In this first week of Ordinary Time, we might find ourselves feeling a little let-down after the Christmas season, especially in parts of the world where it seems cold and dark most days. This is where we can ask for the grace to let the stories of the gospels come alive in our hearts.

The stories from Mark's gospel offer a vivid look into the life of Jesus and his followers on such a human level. Many are stories of healing and the week begins and ends with invitations from Jesus to us -- and to his disciples. To Simon Peter and Andrew, Jesus invites, “Come after me.” To the tax collector Levi he beckons, “Follow me.”

The invitation to healing we are offered can be a part of our own reflection as we begin a new year and want to somehow “fix” what is broken in us. The healing happens if we allow Jesus into our hearts and lives.

As we look at our lives we may find a loneliness or separation from people in our family or others. We have parts of our lives that are dark and embarrassing and seem unchangeable. It is into this very darkness and discomfort that Jesus is moved with pity for us, stretches out his healing hand to us and says, “I do will it. Be made clean.”

We can hear the summons to follow him as a clear and personal call to us from Jesus, the one who already knows us and our failings and yet asks us to be with him. We can hear this invitation more clearly if we can be touched with awareness of our own failings and understand more deeply how much we need a savior in our lives. It is then that our

On the **Second Sunday of Ordinary Time**, a beautiful reading from Isaiah promises vindication which will “shine forth like the dawn.” In the **First Letter to the Corinthians**, we are reassured that each of us has different gifts of the Spirit. “There are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.” The Wedding Feast of Cana is the centerpiece of **John's Gospel**. His mother told the servants to follow his orders and Jesus performed his first public miracle “and so revealed his glory.”

hearts are open to accept this invitation.

We can pray to Jesus this week for the strength to be healed of the patterns and habits of our lives that so often turn us away from him and ask for the grace to make a new beginning in our lives. If we can sit with our hands open in humility, we can accept that we can't do this on our own, but know in our hearts that with the help of God, nothing is impossible.

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