

### SUNDAY REFLECTION

On these first Sundays of the year the gospel passages relate to the beginning of Jesus' public life. If the usual readings had been used last week (Jn. 1:29-34) Jesus was introduced as the Lamb of God destined to take away the sin of the world, the Sunday gospels for this year are from St. Matthew. That gospel was directed to Jews who had been converted to Christianity, and so today and on many Sundays there will be quotations from the Old Testament, which would be familiar to these people, with the typical comment of Matthew that the particular passage was fulfilled in the events of Jesus' life.

It was easy for Matthew to find a passage which foretold the particular events of Jesus' life recorded today. Jesus had returned to Galilee, to the land of Napthali after the arrest of John the Baptist, and Isaiah had said long ago that this land would see a great light chasing away the shadows of death, as the first reading today relates. Matthew puts a very positive construction on what has happened – the departure of Jesus from Judea for Galilee. This would be necessary for a Jewish audience because on the face of it what has happened would not be very encouraging for them. Jerusalem was the center of their traditional religion and they would have expected that anything of great importance would have occurred there – for example, the appearance of the long expected messiah, whom they had come to identify with Jesus.

But instead Matthew tells them that Jesus began preaching, announcing the coming of the kingdom of heaven, not in Jerusalem because it had become too dangerous but in Galilee. Matthew shows that all this was foretold by quoting from Isaiah. Galilee described in the

prophecy as a land of the nations, of the non-Jews, because it had become an Assyrian province, is no simply an unimportant region. Nathanael is quoted in John's gospel as saying: 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' (Jn. 1:46).

We are not surprised at this reversal of significance, this repudiation of what was religious tradition for Jewish Christians, because we know the full story of Jesus, how this promised one of God will break with many former religious conventions, how in fact it will be difficult to fit Him into the frame of rabbinical tradition, which is the way Matthew wishes to present Him while endeavoring to show that Jesus is the new Moses and the new Israel, the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets.

The fact that Jesus began His ministry in 'Galilee of the nations' is in accord with the end of Matthew's gospel, where Jesus instructs the women to whom He appears after His resurrection to tell His 'brothers' to go to Galilee where they will see Him (28:10) and when He meets the disciples in Galilee instructs them to make disciples of all the nations (28:19). All of this is reassuring for today's people of the nations, the vast majority of Christians. Reassuring too is the fact that, as recorded in today's passage, the first disciples Jesus called to follow Him were among the most ordinary of people, two fisherman casting their nets, two others mending theirs. But this also illustrates the challenge of the vocation of all Christians, that it is in the midst of daily occupations that Jesus invites people to follow Him, some to leave all behind, but others by their way of living in today's equivalent of the Corinthian community, in the local church.

Practically all commentators agree that the central teaching of Jesus was the kingdom of God, its nearness or arrival. The people of Israel had looked forward for centuries to a time when God would establish a great king among them, one who would be like David of old, enabling them to realize their greatness as a nation chosen by God.

The concrete details of what this new situation might look like varied greatly. At the time of Jesus, for the most part, it had a strong socio-political content. It could mean political liberation, economic prosperity, social cohesion or world dominance. Various groups had their own perspectives on how this situation could be brought about. Some thought of achieving it by means of violence; some by fleeing from the commerce of the world to seclude themselves in the purer conditions of a monastic community; some by strict observance of the law, and others by mild collusion with the existing structures until better times arrived.

Jesus does not follow any of these contemporary options but, instead, preaches a message of personal conversion. This conversion entails a fresh focus on the goodness and graciousness of God, the indiscriminate nature of that love, and on God's desire to bring people into communion of life with Godself and with one another. Conversion involves a turning towards God and a generous acceptance of what God is offering – a new kind of relationship with Godself and with other people. There is sheer gift being offered, not a prize to be won by hard graft from an unwilling donor. Jesus preaches the message of God's indiscriminate love graphically in the parables and gives concrete expression to that love in the way He relates to people, addressing their needs, offering forgiveness, wholeness and inclusion within family and community. In the gospel passage of today's Mass there is just the hint of what is to come. The rest of the Gospel will fill out the details.

This mission of proclaiming the message of the Kingdom is not something that Jesus does alone. He engages others with a sense of urgency to share in the task. It is Jesus who takes the

initiative in calling together those who are to share in His ministry. He does so in an authoritative, peremptory fashion and He doesn't allow for any delay or excuses in responding to His call. Those whom Jesus calls are no longer individual respondents or apprentices to His trade. They are formed into a group of disciples who will learn from Him by listening to His teaching, observing His practice and eventually participating in His mission. The accomplishment of His mission in bringing the Kingdom to realization depends on the cooperation of His disciples, and becomes even more dependent on them after His own death and resurrections.

Every baptized Christian has been called into that community of disciples of Jesus, that is the Church. Now, as then, they are called to a life of apprenticeship, to learn from the Master and to practice His 'trade'. They are the primary witnesses to the message of the Kingdom, accomplished in word and deed.

**STEWARDSHIP:** There is a certain urgency in today's Gospel as Jesus calls His first disciples – Andrew and Simon, James and John. Each one follows Jesus *immediately*, unhesitatingly abandoning nets and boats and father and fellow-workers. To what is Jesus calling me – at *this* moment, in *these* circumstances? What will I need to abandon in order to follow Him?

## READINGS PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

2 FEB '20

**Mal. 3:1-4:** Malachi proclaims that the Lord will send a holy messenger to prepare his way, and the priests and people need to repent or face judgment.

**Heb. 2:14-18:** Because God's Son lowered Himself to take on weakness, our human flesh and blood, He was able to become our true Mediator and Savior.

**Lk. 2:22-40:** After forty days, Mary's child Jesus is presented in the Temple, and He is revealed as the one who will bring salvation to all peoples.

## FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION (CANDLEMAS)

In commemoration of the Feast of the Presentation (Candlemas) next Sunday (2 Feb) we will bless candles used here at the church at all the Masses. You are invited to bring candles from home if you would like to have them blessed. Just place them in the basket in front of the altar.

On February 2nd a quaint tradition unfolds, known well to schoolchildren and adults alike. The fate of Spring hangs in the balance as a burrowing animal looks for its shadow. But where did this tradition come from?

For centuries, February 2<sup>nd</sup> has been celebrated as Candlemas, a Christian Feast Day. Candlemas is also called the Feast of the Presentation, because it honors the day that Mary and Joseph presented the infant Jesus at the Temple. In bringing their child to the Temple and offering a sacrifice, Jesus' parents were following the Mosaic law (specifically Leviticus 12:6). As the Gospel of Luke recounts:

*"And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord." (Luke 2:22)*

### **Why is Candlemas On February 2<sup>nd</sup>?**

The date of Candlemas is always February 2<sup>nd</sup> because it is exactly 40 days (inclusive) after Christmas on December 25<sup>th</sup>. The Mosaic law stated that 40 days was the period of purification after the birth of a child, and so the presentation took place 40 days after Jesus was born. Incidentally, February 2<sup>nd</sup> is also halfway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, so the date has always had significance for ancient people.

### **So What's The Connection To Groundhog Day?**

Candlemas became linked to weather predictions about the end of winter because of an old English poem:

*If Candlemas  
Be fair and bright,  
Come winter, have another flight.  
If Candlemas bring clouds and rain,  
Go winter, and come not again.*

It makes sense that early February was a good time to prognosticate about the weather, especially as February 2<sup>nd</sup> marks the midpoint between Winter and Spring. And the English poem appears to be the source of the shadow connection: "fair and bright" = sun = shadows = more winter, while "clouds and rain" = no sun = no shadows = spring arriving soon. It seems counterintuitive (why should a sunny day mean *more* winter?), but this is the exact pattern that Groundhog Day follows.

### **Why Candlemas?**

Inspired by the words of the Canticle of Simeon ("a light to the revelation of the Gentiles"), by the 11th century, the custom had developed in the West of blessing candles on the Feast of the Presentation. The candles were then lit, and a procession took place through the darkened church while the Canticle of Simeon was sung. Because of this, the feast also became known as Candlemas. While the procession and blessing of the candles is not often performed in the United States today, Candlemas is still an important feast in many European countries.

## **BLESSING OF THROATS FEAST OF ST. BLAISE**

**THE BLESSING OF THROATS WILL TAKE PLACE HERE AT  
ST. STEPHEN, MARTYR NEXT WEEKEND 1-2 FEBRUARY  
AT ALL THE MASSES**

For centuries, it has been a tradition for Catholics to have their throats blessed on or close to the Feast of St. Blaise (3 Feb.) the patron saint against throat ailments. It's a lovely tradition with St. Blaise, who healed a boy with a fish bone stuck in his throat.

The priest takes two unlit candles and crosses them. He places one on one side of the parishioner's neck and one on the other. And, the priest says this prayer:

By the intercession of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from every malady of the throat, and from every possible mishap; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

## **LITURGICAL SEASONS Continued**

Last week it was mentioned that there are six seasons. Briefly (yes it can be done but hard to believe) described as follows:

### **Advent**

The liturgical year begins on the First Sunday of Advent, the season of preparation for Christ's Birth. The emphasis in the Mass and the daily prayers of this season is on the threefold coming of Christ – the prophecies of His Incarnation and Birth; His coming into our lives through grace and the sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Holy Communion; and His Second Coming at the end of time. Sometimes called a "little Lent," Advent is a period of joyful expectation but also of penance, as the liturgical color of the seasons indicates – purple or a bluish purple while in Lent the purple has more of a reddish cast.

### **Christmas**

Advent finds its culmination in the second season of the liturgical year: Christmas.

Traditionally, the Christmas season extended from First Vespers (evening prayer) of Christmas (before Midnight Mass) through Candlemas, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord (Feb. 2) – a period of 40 days. With the revision of the calendar in 1969, "the Christmas season runs, from evening prayer I of Christmas until the Sunday after Epiphany or after 6 January, inclusive" – that is, until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Contrary to the modern attitude and practice the celebration of the Christmas season does not encompass Advent, now end with Christmas Day, but begins after Advent ends and extends into the New Year.

### **Ordinary Time**

On the Monday after the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the longest season of the liturgical year – Ordinary Time – begins. Depending on the year, it encompasses either 33 or 34 weeks, broken into two distinct portions of the calendar, the first ending on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, and the second beginning on the Monday after Pentecost and running until evening prayer I of the First Sunday of Advent. These two periods were once known as the Sundays After Epiphany and the Sundays After Pentecost.) During both periods of Ordinary Time, the emphasis in the Mass and the Church's daily prayer is on Christ's teaching and His life among His disciples.

### **Lent**

Ordinary Time is interrupted by three seasons, the first being Lent, the 40 day period of preparation for Easter. In any given year, the length of the first period of Ordinary Time depends of the date of Ash Wednesday, which itself depends on the date of Easter.

During Lent, the emphasis in the Mass readings and daily prayers of the Church us on the prophecies and fore-shadowings of Christ in the Old Testament, and the increasing revelation of the nature of Christ and His mission. This is a period of fasting, abstinence, prayer and almsgiving to prepare ourselves, body and soul, to die with Christ on Good Friday so that we may rise again with Him on Easter Sunday.

### **Easter Triduum**

The Easter Triduum is a relatively new liturgical season established with the 1969 revisions of the liturgical calendar. It has its roots, though, in the reform of the ceremonies of Holy Week in 1956. The Easter Triduum is the shortest of the liturgical seasons. It begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, and closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday.

## **Easter**

This sixth season of the liturgical calendar begins on Easter Sunday and runs to Pentecost Sunday, a period of 50 days. Easter is the greatest feast in the Christian calendar, for "if Christ is not risen, our faith is in vain." The Resurrection of Christ culminates in His Ascension into Heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, which inaugurates the mission of the Church to spread the Good News of salvation to all the world.

## **Rogation and Ember Days**

Besides the six liturgical seasons listed above, the Liturgical Calendar lists a seventh item in its discussion of the yearly liturgical cycle which are the Rogation and the Ember Days. Although these days of prayer of petition and of thanksgiving they are not technically a liturgical season on their own, they are among the oldest annual celebrations in the Church, celebrated continuously for over 1500 years until the 1968 revisions of the calendar. Since then, they are optional celebrations decided on by each country's bishops' conference and are not widely celebrated today.

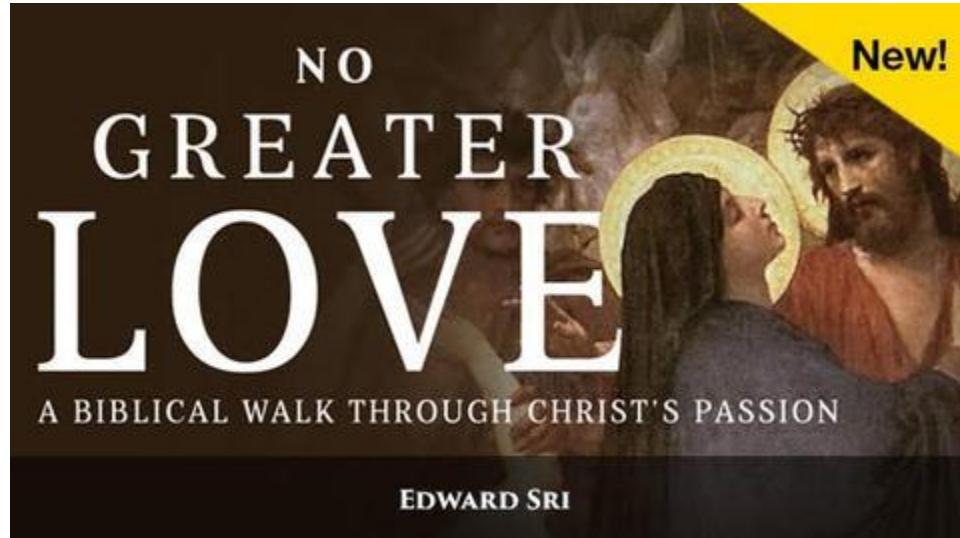
## **ICON: Christ Calling His Followers    "I am the vine, you are the branches"**

**Origin:** "I am the vine, you are the branches." This striking metaphor from John's Gospel (15:5) is used by Jesus to explain the relationship between humanity and Himself. This image uses the vine and branches motif to bring together many of the Gospel themes and scenes in which Jesus called people to be His followers.

**Theology & Symbolism:** The focal point of the icon is a full-length view of Jesus, His hands outstretched in welcome. His feet are humbly bare and His head is surrounded by a gilded halo. Inscribed on the halo is a cross and the Greek letters omega, omicron, and nu. They spell "ho on," or in English, "Who Am," the name of God in Exodus 3:14. Jesus wears a tunic of red to remind us of His humanity, the sacrifice of His blood, and the New Covenant sealed thereby. Over the tunic is a cloak of dark heavenly blue to remind us of His divinity. The fingers of Jesus' right hand are held in the ancient gesture of blessing; the index finger straight, the middle and little fingers curved, the thumb and ring fingers crossed. They form the letters ICXC, the Greek monogram for Jesus Christ, Iesous Christos. Surrounding the central figure of Christ are six smaller images from the Gospels recalling instances of Jesus' call to follow Him. Beginning in the upper right corner and moving clockwise we find: "I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me should not remain in darkness." (Jn. 12:46) And also recalling the words of Isaiah: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Is. 9:2). Next, the scene of the crucifixion, reminding us of the admonition found in all of the synoptic Gospels, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Mt. 16:24). The sheaf of wheat in the lower right corner recalls the words, "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few" (Mt. 9:37 or Lk. 10:2). The water scene in the lower left shows James and John leaving their father Zebedee, "Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him" (Mt. 4:22). The young beardless youth in red is John, traditionally portrayed as a young man because he was the last apostle to die. The two men in left center are a little more difficult to identify. One of the few easily recognized faces in Byzantine iconography is that of Simon Peter, the one dressed in yellow. The scene is therefore most likely that found in Jn. 1:40-42, in which Peter's brother Andrew, identified as a disciple of

John the Baptist (hence the shaggy hair), introduces him to the Messiah. And finally in the top left,, we see the disciples struggling to comprehend Christ's teachings about Bread from Heaven that have caused many of His followers to turn away. "So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:67-68). The border of the icon is covered in gold leaf. Gold is used in icons to symbolize the divine light of Heaven, the "uncreated light" of Genesis 1:3. ("Created light" didn't come along until the fourth day, Genesis 1:14.)

## LENTEN LESSONS



Once again we will have the usual soup supper along with a presentation and group discussion during the season of Lent beginning Thursday 27 Feb. This year the program will be centered on "No Greater Love A Biblical Walk Through Christ's Passion" presented by Dr. Edward Sri.

Filmed on location in the Holy Land, *No Greater Love* is a biblical pilgrimage that reveals Christ's amazing love for us. Best-selling author Edward Sri guides you through the last hours of Christ's life. You will walk step-by-step with Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane to the Mount of Calvary. Every step of the way, Old Testament prophecies, messianic expectations, biblical symbolism, and historical context shed light on the mystery of Christ's suffering and death. With these insights, Catholics can come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of God's immeasurable and unconditional love for drawing closer to Jesus than ever have before. The program will consist of sessions:

1. The Prayer of the Agony: Jesus in Gethsemane 27 February 7:00 p.m.
2. "Are You the Christ?" (Mk. 14:61) Jesus' Arrest and Trial Before the Sanhedrin 12 March 7:00 p.m.
3. The Trial Before Pilate: Jesus is Condemned to Death

19 March 7:00 p.m.

4. The Death of the Messiah: Jesus Carries His Cross. Is Crucified, and Dies 26 March 7:00 p.m.
  5. The Seven Last Words: Jesus the Teacher at Calvary 2 April 7:00 p.m.

**SAINT OF THE WEEK: JOHN BOSCO (1815-1888) 31 JAN**

Founder of the Salesians and mentor of St. Dominic Savio (d. 1857). Born in Becchi, Piedmont, Italy, the son of poor parents. He began studies for the priesthood at the age of sixteen, receiving ordination in 1841. Sent to the Valdocco suburb of Turin, he attracted hundreds of young people to his chapel services and evening classes, and reopened a boarding house with his mother for apprentices, followed by workshops to teach useful trades.

As an educator, John Bosco was noted for using a minimum of restraint and discipline along with a great deal of love and encouragement. He kept careful watch over the development of the boys in his care. Interested not only in their spiritual growth, John established workshops for the boys in shoemaking, tailoring, and printing. To pay for all this, John preached, wrote popular books and relied on donations.

In order to further the work which he had placed under the patronage of Our Lady, Help of Christians and St. Francis de Sales, he laid the foundation for the Society of St. Francis de Sales, the Salesians. This was followed by a similar congregation for women, the Daughters of Our Lady, Help of Christians (the Daughters of Mary Auxiliatrix). By the time of his death, the congregation had nearly a thousand priests and nine hundred sisters. His long labors were characterized by boundless patience – he once claimed that he could not remember ever punishing a child – and in the face of bitter opposition from local Church and government officials. A pioneer in vocational training; first saint in history to submit to a press interview; forty thousand people filed past his body at his death; first canonized saint in whose honor a national holiday was declared in Italy; patron of editors; known as the “Apostles of Youth.” Of him, Pope Pius XI declared: “In his life the supernatural almost became natural and the extraordinary, ordinary. Pius XI canonized him in 1934.

## PASTOR'S SCHEDULE

### EVENTS OF THE COMING WEEK

Saturday 25 Jan

8:30 a.m. Mass

**10:00 a.m. First Reconciliation**

1:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass

Sunday 26 Jan Third Sunday Ordinary Time

7:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. Masses

2:45 p.m. Meeting

Monday 27 Jan Day Off

8:30 a.m. Mass

9:30 a.m. - Meetings

Tuesday 28 Jan

8:30 a.m. Mass

7:00 p.m. Parish Council

Wednesday 29 Jan

6:30 a.m. Mass

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass

Thursday 30 Jan

8:30 a.m. Mass

5:00 p.m. Confessions

6:30 p.m. Mass

7:00 p.m. RCIA

Friday 31 Jan

8:30 a.m. Mass

11:00 – Meetings

5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Adoration

Saturday 1 Feb

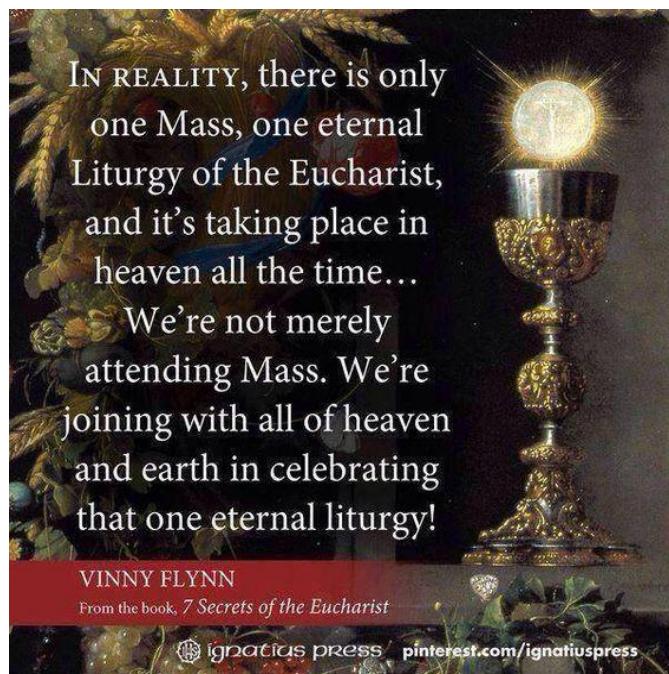
8:30 a.m. Mass

1:00 -4:30 p.m. Confessions

**5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Presentation of the Lord Blessing of Candles  
and Blessing of Throats**

**Sunday 2 Feb Presentation of the Lord Blessing of Candles  
and Blessing of Throats**

**7:00 a.m. 8:30 a.m. 11:30 a.m. Masses**





## MEANING OF THE WORD CATHOLIC

The word 'catholic' is derived from the Greek adjective καθολικός (**katholikos**). It is a combination of the Greek words **kata-** (κατά) meaning "according to" and **holos-** (όλος) meaning "whole", or more colloquially, "universal."

"[The Church] is called catholic because it extends over the whole world, and because it teaches universally and infallibly each and every doctrine which must come to the knowledge of men." (St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

Hear our Lord speak: "And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a witness to all nation." (Matt 24:14). "Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)



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