

**Reflection on the Gospel-3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B
(Mark 1:14-20)**

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Most of the gospel readings for this year are from Mark's story of Jesus. As with any story, it is best to read it from beginning to end, attending to the story line, to indications of place and time, to all the actors or characters in the story, human and other-than-human. While the main character or actor is Jesus, there are other characters and character groups that claim our attention. The "worlds" we encounter include the celestial world, the world of spirits and demons, the human, the animal and the plant worlds. In many ways, we can resonate with the worlds that Mark creates. In other ways, they are alien to 21st century scientific sensibilities. We bring our consciousness of these differences to our reading of the text. As we embark on this reading we might also become aware of what we bring to the text, "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties" (GS 1) of our world today. What we bring to the text informs our understanding of the text.

As we read, we might think of this gospel as a two-act drama. The first act in the drama (Mark 1:1-8:26) raises the question, "Who is this?" The central scene (Mark 8:27-30) provides a partial answer: Jesus is the Messiah or God's Anointed One, the Christos. The second act of the drama (Mark 8:31-16:8) is full of surprises for its earliest audiences: Jesus is not a militaristic messiah, but one who is prepared to suffer death for the sake of God's empire; God finally triumphs over suffering and death.

The invitation to us as readers is to enter into the drama, to identify with the characters and character groups, and to hear the teachings of Jesus. In the passage selected for today, Jesus announces his program and invites others to reorient their lives, to expand their horizons and to join him on a mission of proclaiming God's kin-dom, God's way of being in the world. Jesus proclaims the advent of God's "time" or *kairos*, as opposed to ordinary clock time (*chronos*). It is crisis time, time to attend to the cries of the earth and the cries of those rendered poor in every age.

One might get the impression that the disciples are all men. We have to go to the end of the gospel to find that there are also women "who came up with him to Jerusalem" from Galilee. The central section of the gospel (Mark 9-10) makes it clear that there are children on the journey as well. So let us imagine a much more extended group around Jesus than today's little gospel reading suggests. Women, men, and children, all are invited to leave behind whatever gets in the way of bringing God's empire into our world.