

A call to conversion



**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) O sing a new song to the Lord; sing to the Lord, all the earth. In his presence are majesty and splendour, strength and honour in his holy place.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps 24)

**ANTIPHON:** Teach me your ways, O Lord.

**RESPONSE:** Teach me your ways, O Lord.

**LECTOR:** Lord, make me know your ways. Lord, teach me your paths. Make me walk in your truth, and teach me: for you are God my saviour. **R.**

**LECTOR:** Remember your mercy, Lord, and the love you have shown from of old. In your love remember me, because of your goodness, O Lord. **R.**

**LECTOR:** The Lord is good and upright. He shows the path to those who stray, he guides the humble in the right path; he teaches his way to the poor. **R.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** Alleluia, alleluia! The kingdom of God is near: believe the Good News! Alleluia!

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) Look toward the Lord and be radiant; let your faces not be abashed.

Or

I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

**TODAY'S READINGS** Jonah 3:1-5. 10; 1 Cor 7:29-31; Mk 1:14-20

**NEXT WEEK** (4th Sunday, Year B) Dt 18:15-20; Ps 94; 1 Cor 7:32-35; Mark 1:21-28

21 January 2024 3rd Sunday Year B

The Greek word "metanoia" is often used by theologians as well as psychologists to describe a deep change of heart and mind, which results from having our previous beliefs and values challenged and consequently, turning towards a way of living which embraces a greater openness to growth and to God. It is this invitation which Jesus put to his disciples by the sea of Galilee in today's gospel.

Erik Varden, a Trappist monk whom Pope Francis appointed bishop of Trondheim, Norway, described his own experience of conversion in his book *Entering the Twofold Mystery: On Christian Conversion* (Bloomsbury, 2022) Returning home one night to the priory he was living at, while he was a research student in Paris, he was shocked to find a dishevelled, homeless man sleeping in the doorway.

Annoyed at first, he collected his thoughts and roused the man, who was irate at being wakened. Bishop Varden offered to help the man find accommodation. As they walked through the streets of Paris, the man said his name was Manu (short for Emmanuel) and in the darkness pointed out the vague outlines of homeless people known to him, who were sleeping. He saw to it that the man had warm, safe accommodation for the night. As they parted, the man took his hand, thanked him warmly and expressed the hope that perhaps one day, they would meet again.

Bishop Varden writes that "my heart previously dark, was charged with a joy so profound it was painful." Although he had previously intended to return to a secure job after his studies, this encounter made him feel a deep call to commit his life to praying for the world "in union with the sacrifice of Christ." To him, this would be a way to "breathe hope into our too often hopeless world." This experience set him on the life-changing path to becoming a monk.

For some, responding to a call may set us on a path to the consecrated life or priesthood. For all of us though, it is an invitation to turn away from a world view which is egocentric, narrow, exclusive, or judgmental; to both ourselves and others, towards a broad empowering vision. It is saying yes to a way of being which is intimately grounded in God.

Thomas Merton writes of his moment of insight "In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the centre of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realisation that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I theirs."

A call to conversion helps us realise that it is the deep reality of beauty, mystery, awe and generosity to which we are ultimately called to commit ourselves. May this sacred commitment to be in intimate communion with God and with all creation, inspire us to live in a way which makes a radical difference to our communities and to the world.

Sophie Clements  
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