

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

One of the first questions that people ask me when I tell them that I am soon to retire is, “Where are you going to live?” I am fortunate to be able to say that I will continue to live in Mount Barker in the house that I have shared with Fr. John for the last seven or so years. That is the place that I call home. Parish leadership met this week to discern where it would be best for our new Parish Priest to live. We decided to invest in buying a house away from the Parish Centre that Fr. Philip would be able to call home.

Our readings for today can help us to reflect upon how important it is to have somewhere that we can call home. We pick up the story of Jesus when he leaves the home that he had grown up in at Nazareth and travels north east to a fishing village on the shore of the lake of Galilee. For the next three years, if Jesus can call anywhere home, it will be the town of Capernaum. Mathew describes it as being on the borders of Zebulon and Nathtali. He then quotes what we read as our first reading today from the book of Isaiah.

God promises that although this land may have been humbled in the past, He will in the future confer glory upon it. It will become God’s own country where people who dwelt in darkness will now live in the light. They will experience a new freedom. “For the yoke that was

weighing on him, the bar across his shoulders, the rod of his oppressor, these you will break as on the day of Midian”

When Jesus began his public ministry on the shores of the Lake of Galilee this prophecy began to be fulfilled. People were drawn to Jesus because he revealed the light of God’s love for them. People began to experience the freedom that he offered them as he healed them of their sicknesses and as he gave them a new understanding of how God was calling them to live. He began his preaching where John the Baptist had finished his. He uses the same words that John had used: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.” The kingdom was not yet fully present, but the invitation was there for people to begin to be in tune with God’s reign and so by the goodness of their lives to make present God’s life and love. We hear that invitation again today. Jesus constantly calls us to repentance so that we can be fully open to God’s love for us and be willing to share that love with those around us.

Today we listen as Jesus calls the first of his disciples to leave everything and to follow him. Jesus meets them where they are and invites them to follow him. The brothers Peter and Andrew hear Jesus say to them, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men” We can’t help but be amazed at the immediacy with which

they answer that call. They don't ask any questions. They just go. The other pair of brothers, James and John, are just as quick in the way that they leave their boat and their father to follow Jesus. I think it is good to remember that these men were successful businessmen and not poor day labourers looking for someone to hire them. They had a lot to leave behind when they began to follow Jesus.

Jesus meets us where we are too. No matter what we are doing Jesus calls us to follow him. We have a lot to leave behind too when we take seriously the call to follow Jesus. Few of us are called to leave behind the family to which we belong, the house in which we live or the work that we do each day. But we are called to leave behind many other things. We are called to leave behind any self-centeredness that we might have. Jesus teaches us how to be people who centre our lives upon Him. Jesus empowers us to be people for others. Jesus calls us to leave behind our dependence upon material things. Jesus teaches us how we can depend upon Him for all that we need. Jesus empowers us to share generously what we have been given. Jesus calls us to leave behind the anxiety that robs us of peace. Jesus teaches us that we can put our hope and our trust in Him, no matter what seems to be going wrong around us. Jesus empowers us to bring His peace to others, to walk

with them and support them through the troubles that they encounter.

When St. Paul wrote to the Corinthian community, he had to chastise them for their lack of unity. There were serious differences in that community of believers as there can be within any group of people who are called to follow Jesus. We will only discover our unity when we focus in on the one who leads us. No matter who we are, no matter where we come from, when we accept the call to follow Jesus we become one with Him and through him we become one with each other.

During this first week of the Australian Open the television coverage has focussed upon the Australians who were playing. We were no doubt hoping that more of them would be still in the draw. On Thursday we will be celebrating Australia Day. As thankful as we are for being able to call Australia home, we know that there is another dimension to our lives. We know that as disciples of Jesus we can only truly be at home in Jesus. It is only there that we can experience the fullness of life and the peace that we all desire.