

2018

- Now we see Jesus in Capernaum, where He lived after His temptations in the desert...as we hear from Matthew “...when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea...” (Matthew 4:12-13)
- “Capernaum” was a fishing village primarily, and is actually “Kfar Nahum”, meaning “Nahum’s village”...though no connection to the prophet Nahum of scripture is known...and it’s on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee in northeastern Israel.
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- Now Jesus was going to the synagogue on the Sabbath, “as was His custom”, as St. Luke puts it...providing us a model to follow.
- Why is that? Because the Mass—the worship of God in thanksgiving, and asking His grace in our lives—is by far the most important thing that we do.
- All other things we do will one day be forgotten...our stuff belonging to others or in the landfill...and we will hardly be more than a mere memory.
- But...our time in eternity will have only begun

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- I often pick up a wonderful little book by the Catholic philosopher Peter Kreeft called “Before I Go”...his thoughts he wants to leave behind for his children and grandchildren...and he writes in one place:
 - “...love people and God, but not stuff, and worship God alone... Things are means, not ends. Things are to be used; people are ends to be loved. We are really stupid, because unless we remember to correct ourselves, we naturally slide into using people and loving things. We continually have to remind ourselves to be sane, to live in reality, to treat everything as what it really is.” (Chap. 34)
 - And, of course, that reality is to love God...to love neighbor. Always keeping our eyes on truth, which is Jesus Christ and the salvation He offers to us through our discipleship and faith.
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- Now, the first part of the Mass—called the liturgy of the Word—is very much like a synagogue service Jesus would have attended: the Word of God read and expounded upon, and prayers offered for the welfare of the people.
- This hearing of the Word of God is one of the greatest bolsterings of our faith...for through His Word He pours grace into us.
- This is why hearing the Word of God at least weekly has been part of the worship for thousands of years...and is why Jesus Himself gives us this example today of faithful attendance at the synagogue.
- Because He of all people doesn't NEED to hear the Word; He IS the Word. And yet, aware of OUR need, He provides a model for us to follow...as does His entire earthly life.
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- And, in the Mass, after hearing His Word, we are strengthened even more greatly in the Eucharist—His very Body and Blood...our manna in the desert, our sustenance and strengthening for the hectic week ahead...fortifying us against the temptations of the secular world which would draw us away from Him.
- This is why in the letter to the Hebrews we hear: “...*let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...*” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

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- But...workers are needed for God's harvest...and as St. Paul writes to the Romans: “[*It is written:*] ‘everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.’ But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!’” (Romans 10:13-15)
 - Who preaches that good news of Christ? Bishops, priests, deacons and religious, yes...but also catechists, youth and adult ministers,

every good Christian and most of all, parents—by their lives and what they emphasize within their families.

- Yet...some are called to another sacrifice, and St. Paul writes in our 2nd reading today how unmarried life facilitates following Christ more solely and ardently...because marriage imposes a necessity to please the spouse for the good of the union.
- The root of the Church's discipline (not doctrine) for celibacy of priests is this reading, as well as Jesus' own celibacy...so that priests can give themselves more perfectly (hopefully) to the service of God and His people.
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- Now this is a completely gratuitous and mysterious calling...and I know in my case it is undeniable proof of God's sense of humor.
- ...because I think my first crush was in 3rd grade. She, an older woman—4th grader, complete with blond ringlets.
- Loved women ever since...even was engaged once...and so one would think G. Jones the last person on earth to be called to celibacy.
- And yet...relationships always missed some indefinable essential element...and despite the desire for wife and children, always there was a longing for more time with God...
- ...always, like the Sirens' song to the ancient mariner...ever calling across the ocean of life...ever hearkening...

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- So, if you're unmarried, don't just assume God's plan for you IS marriage. It may BE celibacy...ordained, religious, or simply being an example of Godly virtue in the unmarried life.
 - For men 17 and older, know that there is a vocations weekend next weekend in ABQ. If you've ever felt a call to priesthood, it wouldn't hurt to call up the Archdiocese to go. No strings attached. Meet the Archbishop. Nice view. Free food.
 - I think a women's vocation weekend is later in the year.

- But, to whichever life God is calling you, I know by hard-gotten experience that you'd be wiser—and happier—to discern well and answer that call.

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lectionary: 71

Reading 1 Dt 18:15-20

Moses spoke to all the people, saying:

"A prophet like me will the LORD, your God, raise up for you from among your own kin;

to him you shall listen.

This is exactly what you requested of the LORD, your God, at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said,

'Let us not again hear the voice of the LORD, our God, nor see this great fire any more, lest we die.'

And the LORD said to me, 'This was well said.

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kin,

and will put my words into his mouth;

he shall tell them all that I command him.

Whoever will not listen to my words which he speaks in my name,

I myself will make him answer for it.

But if a prophet presumes to speak in my name

an oracle that I have not commanded him to speak,

or speaks in the name of other gods, he shall die."

Responsorial Psalm Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9

R. (8) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;

let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.

Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us bow down in worship;

let us kneel before the LORD who made us.

For he is our God,

and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:

"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,

as in the day of Massah in the desert,

Where your fathers tempted me;

they tested me though they had seen my works."

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Reading 2 1 Cor 7:32-35

Brothers and sisters:

I should like you to be free of anxieties.

An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord,
how he may please the Lord.

But a married man is anxious about the things of the world,
how he may please his wife, and he is divided.

An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord,
so that she may be holy in both body and spirit.

A married woman, on the other hand,
is anxious about the things of the world,
how she may please her husband.

I am telling you this for your own benefit,
not to impose a restraint upon you,
but for the sake of propriety
and adherence to the Lord without distraction.

Gospel Mk 1:21-28

Then they came to Capernaum,
and on the sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught.
The people were astonished at his teaching,
for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit;
he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?
Have you come to destroy us?"

I know who you are; the Holy One of God!"

Jesus rebuked him and said,

"Quiet! Come out of him!"

The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him.

All were amazed and asked one another,

"What is this?"

A new teaching with authority.

He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him."

His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.