

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

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Most of the gospel readings this year will be from Mark's story of Jesus. As with any short story, it is best to read it from beginning to end at one sitting. A meditative reading takes about two hours. The main character is Jesus and there are other character and character groups. The first part of the story (Mark 1:1-8:26) raises the question, 'Who is this?' The central passage (Mark 8:27-30) provides a partial answer: Jesus is the Messiah or God's Anointed One, the Christos. The second part of the story (Mark 8:31-16:8) is full of surprises: 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 story, to identify with the characters and character groups, to attend to the material world encoded in the story, and to listen to the teachings of Jesus.

In the passage selected for today, the Markan Jesus announces his program and invites others to reorient their lives and join him on a mission of proclaiming God's way of being in the world. Jesus' first word is to announce the advent of God's *kairos*, God's 'time', signalled by the nearness of God's reign or empire. This notion of God's reign would have evoked in its first hearers the prophetic dream for an end to violence and injustice. They are then confronted by an imperative to take stock of their lives, to "repent". The Greek verb for "repent" literally means to "think beyond". As we listen across the ages, we hear an invitation to expand our horizons, to consider possibilities beyond our ordinary imaginings and to do this not just once but interminably. A second imperative is added to the first: "believe in the gospel". Those who truly believe commit themselves to a whole new way of being in the world.

The final sequence depicts the call of four fishermen, Simon, Andrew, James and John. They are invited to "follow" Jesus, to live out in their lives the pattern of his life. 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 gospel reading suggests. Women, men, and children, we are all invited to leave behind whatever gets in the way of making God's empire a reality and transforming our ravaged planet. Not easy.