

**Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis**  
**Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Jan. 23-24, 2021, Cycle B**

Paul the Apostle tells the Corinthians, "The time is running out." "The world in its present form is passing away." Paul encourages them: "From now on, let those having wives act as not having them, those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing, not rejoicing, those buying as not owning, those using the world, as not using it fully." Is St. Paul's advice practical?

Over Christianity's 2000 year history, there have been many, like Paul, who thought Jesus' return and the last judgement were imminent. Some have even tried to pin an exact date on Jesus' return. Of course, nothing ever came of such specific predictions! Even Jesus himself warned us we are wasting our time if we spend our efforts trying to predict the exact date of his return in glory. Jesus tells us the time of his return is known to the Father alone. Even though Paul the Apostle believed Jesus' return would happen even in his lifetime, he did not dare set a date.

Yet, Paul's sense of urgency is quite on the mark for believers of all times. He says: "for the world indeed in its present form is passing away." The judgement on the world was rendered when Jesus rose from the dead – thus God began a whole new creation where death does not reign. Paul's urgency reflects Jesus urgency in His first days of ministry as portrayed in the Gospel of Mark! Mark tells us Jesus began by announcing: "This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel." Jesus is proclaiming something important is happening now! The Kingdom of God is being brought in now, not tomorrow or ages down the road! Therefore, Jesus demands that we make decisions now, before we miss the boat entirely. "Repent" now Jesus says; "believe in the gospel" now! Jesus calls on us to reorient our hearts, our minds and our lives toward God, NOW! If Jesus is truly the Son of God, then God has definitely broken into time, and has begun the recreation of the world. We have no time to waste – we either decide we belong to the world that is passing away, or we belong to the New Kingdom of God, that God is establishing through Jesus.

Jesus' call of his first disciples expresses the imperative to respond here and now. "Come after me" Jesus calls out to Peter and Andrew; and we are told they immediately abandoned their nets and followed Jesus. The same happened with James and John, the sons of Zebedee. "They left their father in the boat and followed him."

We might say, I can't drop everything like those early disciples, and follow Jesus in his itinerant mission. I have family obligations, a job to do and bills to pay. I just can't drop my responsibilities and leave others in a lurch. Well, Jesus is not necessarily asking us to follow him in an itinerant lifestyle. We also know that Jesus called disciples who he did not ask to leave everything behind. Disciples like Zacchaeus, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary followed Jesus' call to be his disciples right from their homes, continuing in their everyday responsibilities. Responding to Jesus' call: "Come after me," is about transforming and taking on Jesus' mind and heart, not necessarily taking on His mission in exactly his style.

Jesus calls out to us to follow him right now! "The Kingdom of God is at hand! Repent! And believe in the Good News." The end times are now! God's Kingdom has begun. God's Kingdom will ultimately win out. With Jesus we are in the last stage of salvation history. We either decide to follow him, or we miss the boat altogether.