

**THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (1/24-25/2009)**

*Jonah 3/1-10, Psalm 25, 1 Corinthians 7/29-31, Mark 1/14-20*

Here comes Jesus!

What if that message would be proclaimed in every church, in every liturgy this Sunday?

What's wrong with me? It is proclaimed in every church!

But what if this year it were different?

What if Jesus, at those words, physically entered our lives and became our guest.

There is an interesting book making the rounds these days – it's called "The Shack" by Wm. Paul Young

A stricken man, bowed down under "A Great Sadness" because of the abduction and murder of his young daughter, is invited to spend a weekend with God.

God is called "Papa", and is represented by an African American woman who is a great cook!

The Holy Spirit is a wraithlike presence who is wise beyond measure, and Jesus is a likeable but not very good-looking Middle-easterner.

I must admit that, at times, I found the story a bit much, but I also found it thought-provoking.

The idea that God the Father shows up as an African-American woman named "Papa" makes you sit up and take notice.

One more reminder that our pre-conceptions of God are just that – preconceptions which are bound to be off the mark.

God will not be stereotyped by any of our human attempts to package the Divine.

As for Jesus, he is very believable in the story, and the suffering man finds in him a kindred soul, one who can really feel for his particular sadness and for the sorrows of all people.

The *Gospel of St. Mark*, as you know, arguably presents the most human side of Jesus' ministry, even though, at the outset, you are told quite clearly that Jesus is the Son of God.

You won't find that title applied to Jesus again until the very end of the Passion narrative, and then it will be used by a Roman soldier witnessing Jesus' death.

So allow the humanity of Mark's Jesus to sink into your consciousness during this liturgical year.

Today's reading is a perfect example of Jesus' agenda.

John the Baptist is in prison and Jesus takes over for him, preaching the good news in Galilee.

His message mirrors the message of John, but Jesus does not go it alone.

Immediately, he selects a small group of men to be his followers.

The work ahead will be arduous, and help will be needed all along the way.

Jesus is a charismatic man, one who is attractive to people like these hardy, pragmatic fishermen.

So challenging are Jesus' words that the fishermen drop everything and take off after him.

While you might question the prudence of leaving everything behind to go walking and preaching all through Galilee with a relatively unknown itinerant rabbi, you cannot but admire the men's spontaneous generosity.

Jesus has come upon the scene and indelibly entered their lives.

Don't try to figure it out psychologically; *Mark* wasn't necessarily into psychology.

It's a God-like moment, one that can happen to you as well, and maybe it will once again.