

The World Is Changing

Jon. 3: 1-5, 10; 1 Cor. 7: 29-31; Mk. 1: 14-20

In the Gospel for this Sunday, we read Mark's account of the early days of Jesus' public ministry. John the Baptist had been arrested by King Herod for 'upsetting the applecart' by proclaiming that the kingdom of God was close at hand and that the Jewish people should repent and turn away from their sinful ways. Herod feared that the old order was slipping away and that he would lose control.

Then Jesus appeared on the scene continuing John's preaching, saying: '... the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe in the good news'. He warned the Jews that they needed to turn away from sin as the old world order was changing. Then He called Andrew, Peter, James and John to follow Him and, without hesitation, they did so.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, gives the same message. Things are changing quickly so don't cling to your usual behaviours. He tells the Corinthians: 'let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it'. Paul tells the people that the world as they know it is changing and that the things to which they attach great significance will no longer be important.

Certainly, the world as we know it, has changed significantly in the past year. One year ago, who would have believed that we would have to endure partial or total lockdown for ten months and counting? Most of us could not have predicted the amount of sickness, the loss of life, the economic upheaval, and the social unrest that has transpired.

On January 19, 2020, Naida and I left for a four week trip to the Philippines. We packed masks because there had been a recent volcano eruption in the vicinity of Manila and we feared breathing the dust in the air. During our stay in the Philippines, not a mention was made of the volcanic eruption but we needed the masks for COVID protection.

Normal life had changed. Masks were sold out in most stores. Temperature checks were required before entering any building or shopping mall. My big fear was that I would develop a case of the sniffles or a slightly elevated temperature and I would be hauled off to Urgent Care and not be able to return to Canada. On our return trip on February 17, we flew through Hong Kong. Less than two weeks later, all flights to and from Hong Kong were cancelled. We were fortunate to have been able to return to Canada.

Life changes quickly. Every day, we make decisions, many of which are based on factors that don't matter in the big picture. If this pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we should repent and base our daily decisions on things that are lasting; things that transcend normal short-term concerns. We need to decide, like the first apostles, to follow Jesus in all that we do and to do it immediately.

In the Collect for this Sunday, the opening prayer of the Mass that 'collects' our thoughts and desires, we implore God to direct our actions that, in the name of Jesus, we may abound in good works. Following Jesus, loving Jesus means that we perform good works. The pandemic has changed our lives drastically and taught us that perhaps our greatest good work is to maintain the proper COVID responses so that we can protect the lives and health of others.