



## FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year B

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

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

1 Corinthians 7:32-35

Mark 1:21-28

### Gathering

*(An unlit candle, a picture of Jesus of Nazareth and some pictures of people who are/were known for the power of their words are arranged on a table covered with a green cloth.)*

This week we reflect on what it means for us to recognize God's presence in our lives. Last week, we reflected on Jesus' call of the disciples. How did you respond to the call of God this past week?

### Prayer

*(The candle is lit. Members are invited to be in touch with the presence of God. After a time of silence, members pray as follows in two groups.)*

### Psalm 95

I: O come, let us sing to the Most High, Creator of the cosmos;  
Let us make a joyful noise to the Beloved!  
Let us come to the radiant One with thanksgiving,

with gratitude let us offer our psalms of praise!

II: For the Beloved is Infinite, the Breathing Life of all.  
The depths of the earth belong to Love;  
the heights of the mountains as well.  
The sea and all that is in it, the dry land and air above  
were created by Love.

I: O come, let us bow down and give thanks,  
let us be humble before the Blessed One!  
For the Beloved is Supreme, and  
we, blessed to be invited to friendship  
as companions along the Way!

II: O that today you would harken to the Beloved's voice!  
Harden not your hearts, as in the days of old,  
that you be not separated from Love.

All: For life is but a breath in the Eternal Dance,  
a gift to be revered with trust,  
an opportunity to grow in spirit and truth,  
that in passing into new Life,  
you enter into the Heavenly city.

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## HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

*(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)*

*When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. The leader then poses these questions: "What draws you to this gospel?" "Where do you resist this gospel?" The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After additional time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to*

*re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)*

## **Reflection**

“I know you!” The power of recognition. What it can do for one’s soul!

In this gospel we read how Jesus astonished the people who were gathered in the synagogue of Capernaum by his teaching. Of course, people can be smitten by the eloquence of someone’s words, yet not grasp the depth of their meaning. But what is going on here? It seems that it wasn’t so much the eloquence of Jesus’ words that day, as much as it was the inner power by which he spoke to them that captivated his audience. Indeed, they were piercing enough, that even the unclean spirit was shaken by the truth of which Jesus spoke. In the face of that authority, they could only cry out in recognition of who Jesus was! The dark spirit recoiled in the face of the power of love, the power of compassion. This was a force it could not reckon with. The people recognized Jesus’ authority. He was different. They sensed that, but how deeply were their hearts touched by his truth; how deeply did they understand the truth of who they were in God’s eyes?

And what about us? We have listened to the gospel innumerable times over the years, yet we are still capable of not recognizing the God who speaks. Understanding that a closed heart keeps us from recognizing truth of what God is doing in our lives, and from fully appreciating who we are called to be in the sight of God, the psalmist prays a reminder, “Harden not your hearts....” It’s an age-old prayer, we need to hear again and again.

Paula D’Arcy, a speaker and author about spirituality, puts it this way: “God comes to you disguised as your life.” How closely are you paying attention to your life? God’s word seeks daily to enliven our lives, our spirits and to proclaim truth. Where does God’s truth and your recognition meet in your life these days?

## **Questions for Reflection and Conversation**

- ◆ How closely are you paying attention to your life these days?
- ◆ When have you spoken with authority in recognition of truth?
- ◆ When have you recognized your own hardness of heart?
- ◆ How have you recognized the presence of God in your life these days?

## HEARING THE GOSPEL'S LORD

*(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: "What do you hear Christ saying to us in hearing and sharing his word?" "What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?" "How are you/we being called to live in response to God's word?" After a pause, the leader invites the community to conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)*

### Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. In the quiet, pay attention to how God's truth is trying to speak to your life these days.
- ◆ If an election season approaches in your area, be attentive. Before the noise reaches fever pitch, reflect on the gospel values at stake; promote conversation about the common good of all our citizens. In preparation for an election, read or re-read, "Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility," published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops ([www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship](http://www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship)).
- ◆ Reach out to someone whose personal, religious or political perspective you have difficulty accepting. Engage the person in conversation to see what common ground you might attain.

### Prayer

*(After a brief pause, the gospel of the week is re-proclaimed by a member of the community. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: "What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?" "What do you say to him in response?" The community pauses for a full five, perhaps even seven, minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two or a brief thought that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. When this sharing is complete, the leader invites a member to pray as follows on behalf of all.)*

Member:                      Precious Lord,  
   grant me

a sense of humor  
that adds perspective to compassion,  
gratitude  
that adds persistence to courage,  
quietness of spirit  
that adds irrepressibility to hope,  
openness of mind  
that adds surprise to joy,  
that with gladness of heart  
I may link arm and aim  
with the One who saw signs of your kingdom  
in salt and yeast,  
pearls and seeds,  
travelers and tax collectors,  
sowers and harlots,  
foreigners and fishermen,  
and who opens my eyes with these signs  
and my ears with the summons  
to follow to something more  
of justice and joy.

All:

Amen.

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*(Members join in singing, "The Summons." The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, members exchange a sign of peace.)*