

Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

Year A

Is 49:3, 5-6

Ps 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10

I Cor 1:1-3

Jn 1:29-34

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There are many attributes of John the Baptist that are unique and these make this one-of-a-kind man stand out in our mind as no other does. Of all the singular qualities, however, there is probably none that is as heartwarming as the relationship that he had with the family of Jesus. Of all the people that have ever lived, John the Baptist is the only one we know of who was able to call the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, the patron of the Universal Church, by the affectionate names of Aunt Mary and Uncle Joe.

At first glance, this might seem to be quite the honor, but in truth it made John's job as Baptist, herald and prophet so much more difficult. Imagine, if you can, that an angel comes to you in a dream and tells you that your cousin is the savior of the world. I imagine your response would be something like: I don't know what I ate last night, but I had a nightmare!!! It is so difficult to see holiness in our relatives because we are so close to them – we can't see the forest for the trees. I think that is why John the Baptist in today's gospel says several times: I did not know him. If God had told John the Baptist early on that his cousin was the Savior of the world, I doubt he would have taken the message seriously. God wasn't going to reveal to John the "one who ranks ahead" of him until the time was right. And to make sure that John wouldn't make a mistake, God made this a media event by sending the Spirit to rest on Jesus – yep, no doubt about it.

Today's readings all have a similar perspective. What we least expect is sometimes what God wants. In the first reading from Isaiah, God is calling the lowest and smallest of nations – Israel – to do something great. He wants them to be a light to the nations. At the time this was written, Israel was in exile in a hostile nation and no one thought there was any future for the Jewish nation. In the second reading, Paul greets the Corinthians for the first time. They were taken aback because the only thing they had known about Paul was that he was a Christian-killer. He wasn't exactly the one that they thought would be bringing a message of "peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

The greatest surprise, however, is in the response to today's psalm: Here am I Lord; I come to do your will. No less shocking than the revelation that John the Baptist's cousin is the Savior of the world, than that the smallest and most insignificant of nations is to be a light to the

world, than that a murderer bears greetings of peace is that you who are sitting in the pews and chairs of this church are the ones who are called to do God's will. WHO ME??? Yes, YOU!! The will of God is not someone else's business or duty, it is yours. Just as you may find it difficult to believe your cousin is the savior of the world, imagine what your cousin is thinking now about you! You are called to be the messenger. You are called to do God's work. You are called to be the herald of Good News. Don't abdicate your duty. Don't think you are not worthy or that God has dialed a wrong number. The scriptures today are clear; God doesn't call on the mighty and powerful, the obvious and the proud. No, God calls you and me. He wants us to be the hands in the world that shape what has been created. We are to give form to what God has given us. It is not another's task; it is ours. Say it again and again. Say it with conviction. Say it until it sinks in. Say it until it causes you to act: Here am I Lord: I come to do your will.