

Homily – Senor Santo Nino de Cebú

January 20, 2018

In the gospel Jesus declares that the kingdom of God, predicted by the prophets, has arrived. God's kingdom is a place of justice, peace, and harmony – an oasis of compassion, mercy, and unconditional love – a community where everyone is respected and every human right defended. In the kingdom of God, everything and everyone is in right or proper relationships, especially with God.

Is the kingdom of God among us right now? There are clear signs that it is **not!** That is why Jesus immediately adds to his pronouncement: “Repent and believe in the gospel.” We need to look at the events and people of our time in faith – seeing them as God sees them. There are signs that the kingdom of God is among us – when people are esteemed because they are made in the image and likeness of God, even though they may be different in some ways from ourselves. The kingdom of God is also present when missionary disciples strive for justice and peace, are willing to go against the chaotic currents of our society, to stand up for the truth, denouncing lies and falsehoods, to reach out to the most vulnerable among us. To do this faithfully means we have to repent – like the

people of Nineveh – change the way that we think, change our attitudes, ensure that our actions are in accord with the gospel.

Today, Jesus calls his first disciples. Three of them will be his closest friends during his public ministry. He will allow Peter, James, and John to share several special experiences with him, including the agony in the garden. But the same three disciples are also the very ones who seriously misunderstand Jesus and fail him at crucial moments of their intimacy with him. Peter, the leader, will even deny three times that he knew Jesus! But God remains at work in them, calling them to conversion, to repentance, to fidelity.

Today, Jesus calls each of us to be his missionary disciples, proclaiming the gospel faithfully every day, especially by our actions. Following Jesus is not always easy. We have much to learn. Following the Lord is a full-time, lifelong adventure. It is not something we can do half-heartedly.

Our Lady was the first disciple who said yes to God's plan for our salvation and played a difficult but wonderful role in the fulfillment of that plan. May God help us to fix our gaze on the risen Lord, as she did, and build up the kingdom of God in our midst!