

Sunday Message

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year B • 14 January 2024 • Psalter Week 2

I WILL FOLLOW HIM

JOHN 1:35-42

Question: Who do you follow? It's something millions of people do on X - literally.

As you know, X is a social networking tool that lets you follow other people and receive messages from them. You can follow people, and they can follow you. And you can 'unfollow' them, if they annoy or bore you. The most popular person on X is X-owner Elon Musk, with over 140 million followers.

Video-sharing platform TikTok is most popular with teenagers. At the time of writing, the top TikToker is Senegalese-born Italian Khabane Lame, with more than 160 million followers. The most popular person on Instagram is Cristiano Ronaldo with over 582 million followers.

But you don't need a social media account to follow someone or something. Who or what you follow depends on your interests and enthusiasms.

Maybe you're a sports fan, and you follow your local club or county team. Maybe you support a political party or politician or movement. Maybe there's a certain brand or fashion label or product that you like. I like Apple. When Apple launches something new, I want to have it, even if I can't afford it.

REFLECT

Today, it might be useful to think about what it means to be a follower. We Christians follow Jesus, but why? We follow Jesus, but how?

There are three aspects to following we should keep in mind.

First, to follow is a deliberate act, a decision we make with eyes wide open. A conscious, calculated commitment. Something we take responsibility for. A good follower doesn't follow blindly, unthinkingly. After World War II, many of Hitler's henchmen tried to deny responsibility for their actions by claiming they were simply following orders. Some of those responsible for what happened in state and religious-run institutions where abuse took place also claimed they were just doing what they were told. To follow - a person, cause, movement - is something we do with open eyes, fully aware of what we're doing, following because we choose to. Always have

It's part of human nature to attach ourselves to a person, movement or cause, and follow it. In one way or another, even if we never think about it, we are all followers.

Today's Gospel is about following. Jesus calls his first disciples, and they follow him. They leave behind their families and way of life to follow him. There must have been something extraordinarily magnetic about Jesus to make people give up everything to follow him. It seems reckless. Irresponsible. Yet this is what they do.

On social media, you can unfollow someone if you wish. You can also stop following a political party or celebrity or cause. Perhaps you lose interest. Perhaps your worldview changes. Perhaps you grow more mature or detached. Maybe you want a quieter life. Most of Jesus' followers gave up following him when it wasn't trendy anymore, when it became risky.

The challenge for us Christians is never to give up following Jesus. That, even when we stumble and fail, we pick ourselves up and follow him again; that, even when the Church disappoints us, we don't let its weakness stop us from following Jesus. That no matter what trials or tribulations come our way, we never stop following Jesus. That we follow him always, faithfully, to the very end. ■

agency. Never allow yourself to be carried along with the crowd.

Second, to follow is a declaration of loyalty. We identify with a person, a belief, a cause, a movement. We state publicly: this is what I subscribe to, what I believe, what I support. It's taking our lead from the one we follow. We can follow in the wrong direction - think of those who stormed the Capitol building in Washington - towards violence, insurrection, white supremacy. We can follow in the right direction - think of those who followed Dr Martin Luther King - towards justice, equality, racial harmony.

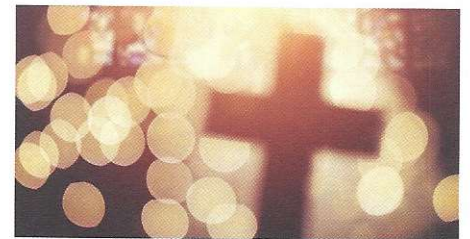
Today, there are so many competing voices, so many people and causes clamouring for our attention. What way do we follow? Who directs our lives? Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." As his disciples, we follow him. We take our lead from him. He is our guide. He shows us the way.

DO

Reflect on what it means to follow Jesus. How closely do you follow him? How much would you be prepared to give up to follow him?

PRAY

Ask the Lord to give you the courage to follow him faithfully, whatever the cost.



LEARN

Each of us has a vocation to spread the Gospel.

To follow Jesus means to become his disciple.

Discipleship is a constant turning towards the Lord.

SAY

"Speak, Lord, your servant is listening; you have the message of eternal life."

Third, to follow someone faithfully is to imitate them. Followers tend to take on the characteristics of the one they follow. The brutality of the Nazis reflected the brutality of their leader; the loving service of a member of the St Vincent de Paul society reflects its founder's compassion. Our lives reflect our leader, in our case, Jesus of Nazareth. Following him means being like him.

At Joe Biden's inauguration three Januarys ago, young Catholic poet Amanda Gorman recited her beautiful poem, 'The hill we climb.' In her closing lines, she called on people to be a light, to show each other the way. There is always light, she said, "if only we are brave enough to see it; if only we are brave enough to be it."

Jesus is the light of the world. To follow him is to walk in his light. To not just see it but to be it. What light guides you? Who do you follow? ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

All the earth shall bow down before you,
O God,
and shall sing to you,
shall sing to your name, O Most High!

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
who govern all things,
both in heaven and on earth,
mercifully hear the pleading of your people
and bestow your peace on our times.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

1 Samuel 3:3-10. 19

A reading from the first book of Samuel.

Samuel was lying in the sanctuary of the Lord,
where the ark of God was, when the Lord called,
'Samuel! Samuel!' He answered, 'Here I am.'
Then he ran to Eli and said, 'Here I am, since you
called me.' Eli said, 'I did not call. Go back and
lie down.' So he went and lay down. Once again
the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Samuel got
up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am, since you
called me.' He replied, 'I did not call you, my son;
go back and lie down.' Samuel had as yet no
knowledge of the Lord and the word of the Lord
had not yet been revealed to him. Once again
the Lord called, the third time. He got up and
went to Eli and said, 'Here I am, since you called
me.' Eli then understood that it was the Lord
who was calling the boy, and he said to Samuel,
'Go and lie down, and if someone calls say,
"Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."' So
Samuel went and lay down in his place.
The Lord then came and stood by, calling
as he had done before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Samuel
answered, 'Speak, Lord, your servant
is listening.' Samuel grew up and the Lord was
with him and let no word of his fall to
the ground.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 39 (40):2, 4, 7-10

Response:

Here I am, Lord! I come to do your will.

- I waited, I waited for the Lord
and he stooped down to me;
he heard my cry.
He put a new song into my mouth,
praise of our God. (R.)
- You do not ask for sacrifice and offerings,
but an open ear.
You do not ask for holocaust and victim.
Instead, here am I. (R.)
- In the scroll of the book it stands written
that I should do your will.
My God, I delight in your law
in the depth of my heart. (R.)
- Your justice I have proclaimed
in the great assembly.
My lips I have not sealed;
you know it, O Lord. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the
Corinthians.

The body is not meant for fornication: it is for
the Lord, and the Lord for the body. God, who
raised the Lord from the dead, will by his power
raise us up too.

You know, surely, that your bodies are members
making up the body of Christ; anyone who is
joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

Keep away from fornication. All the other
sins are committed outside the body; but to
fornicate is to sin against your own body. Your
body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit,
who is in you since you received him from God.
You are not your own property; you have been
bought and paid for. That is why you should use
your body for the glory of God.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Speak, Lord, your servant is listening;
you have the message of eternal life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 1:35-42

A reading from the Gospel according to John.

As John stood with two of his disciples, Jesus
passed, and John stared hard at him and said,
'Look, there is the lamb of God.' Hearing this,
the two disciples followed Jesus. Jesus turned
round, saw them following and said, 'What do
you want?' They answered, 'Rabbi,' – which
means Teacher – 'where do you live?' 'Come and
see' he replied; so they went and saw where he
lived, and stayed with him the rest of that day. It
was about the tenth hour.

One of these two who became followers of
Jesus after hearing what John had said was
Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. Early next
morning, Andrew met his brother and said
to him, 'We have found the Messiah' – which
means the Christ – and he took Simon to
Jesus. Jesus looked hard at him and said, 'You
are Simon son of John; you are to be called
Cephas' – meaning Rock.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant us, O Lord, we pray,
that we may participate worthily in these
mysteries,
for whenever the memorial of this sacrifice is
celebrated
the work of our redemption is accomplished.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

You have prepared a table before me,
and how precious is the chalice that
quenches my thirst.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Pour on us, O Lord, the Spirit of your love,
and in your kindness
make those you have nourished
by this one heavenly Bread
one in mind and heart.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.