

“COME FOLLOW ME: Discipleship Reflections on the Sunday Gospel Readings for Liturgical Year B”

Written by our own Bishop Daniel Mueggenborg

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, Bishop Edward J. Slattery appointed me to serve as synod director for the Diocese of Tulsa. The synod process involves a series of meetings, which serve as listening sessions provide opportunities for the faithful to share their concerns, insights, and recommendations for the future. Over the course of the succeeding two years we held more than thirty such sessions in various parishes and institutions throughout Eastern Oklahoma.

The three primary topics for the synod focused on the celebration of the Lord's Day, family life, and evangelization. The synod was an enlightening process that fostered fruitful discussions and stimulated creative recommendations. Among the insights that left a lasting impression were the following.

First, the faithful had a strong desire to understand their Catholic faith from a biblical basis. At the same time, many people indicated they lacked sufficient knowledge of the scriptures which prevented them from pursuing a personal study of the sacred texts.

Second, the faithful indicated how good homilies were able to change their lives. This was especially true when the message of the scriptures was effectively applied to the practical situations of everyday life.

Third, the faithful expressed a sincere and authentic desire to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus through prayer, the Sacraments, and daily discipleship. In order to facilitate this deepened relationship, they would need to develop a mature adult faith and solid spirituality. They would also need the support and encouragement of a parish faith community that could help them take the necessary steps to grow in that maturity through solid teaching and practical witness.

Although the diocesan synod process formally ended in 2005, these insights continued to inform and shape my life as a priest and my vision for parish ministry. In particular, these insights instilled within me a great desire to connect people with the scriptures in an effective and life-giving way. This series, *Come Follow Me*, was published as a tool that can help parishioners experience the Word of God in sacred scripture and grow in maturity as disciples of Jesus Christ.

This writing contains a series of exegetical, in-depth reflections based on the assigned Gospel reading for the Sundays of a given liturgical year. Each reflection contains a few insights that are explained and then applied to the lived experience of a Christian disciple.

I wish to acknowledge the various excellent biblical commentaries from which the vast majority of insights were drawn that are presented in these reflections. I strongly encourage anyone who wants to become a serious student of Scripture to consult these commentaries directly. In no way do I claim these biblical insights to be my own. I am utterly dependent upon the research of generations of scholars. These reflections do not so much represent an original work on my part as they do a composition of insights gained from studying three essential biblical commentary series and some online homily resources from a noted theologian.

The following biblical commentary series were used extensively and repeatedly in the compilation of these reflections. Each of these series has a separate volume for specific

Gospels and other biblical writings. The reader is encouraged to consult these commentary series:

- The Anchor Bible (New York, Doubleday)
- The New Interpreter's Bible (Nashville, Abingdon Press)
- Sacra Pagina ("A Michael Glazier Book:" Collegeville: The Liturgical Press)

In addition to these three essential commentaries, I also gained insights from homilies given by the Most Reverend Robert Barron and posted on the Word on Fire website. **[NOTE: The link can be found on our parish website's home page.]** Bishop Barron is one of the most talented theologians and communicators in the Catholic Church today. He is also a man of great humility, authenticity, and fidelity. His homilies are an invaluable resource for all disciples and are readily available as part of the "Resources" section of the Word on Fire website. I researched the fifteen-year collection of his homilies in preparation for each of the weekly reflections contained in this book and used those insights, which especially pertained to the biblical text. The reader is encouraged to consult the Word on Fire website for further study of these resources and for the other excellent evangelization materials available from that ministry.

The primary purpose of this writing is to promote a personal, discipleship-focused study of the Gospels and to facilitate small group discussion. It is hoped that this book can be of benefit to parishioners, homilists, and parish ministry staff.

As you read through these reflections in preparation for the Sunday Mass, it will be important to use a Bible to consult the many scriptural passages. The New American Bible Revised Edition is referenced throughout the reflections. The abbreviation "cf." is used to indicate opportunities to confer or compare other relevant biblical texts. The abbreviation "v." is used to identify corresponding scriptural quotes and/or passages.

There is no substitute for the Word of God in Scripture. These reflections may shed light on the biblical texts but they should never replace those sacred texts in personal prayer and study.

When using these reflections for small group discussion, the following recommended process is simple and effective:

- 1. Start with an opening prayer.**
- 2. Read the relevant biblical text.**
- 3. Review one reflection at a time and focus the discussion on the application questions.**
- 4. Proceed to review the next reflection and focus on those questions.**
- 5. Continue this process until all the reflections for a given Gospel passage have been reviewed.**
- 6. Conclude by praying for the members of the group, the parish, and interceding for particular needs.**