

3rd (SJ&QA) Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

Undoubtedly each of our readings today sounds like a wake-up call and illustrates a model of response. When God is calling you and you feel unworthy, just remember these people: Noah was a drunkard. Jacob was a liar. Moses was a basket case. Abraham was too old. Joseph was a dreamer. Gideon was afraid. Elijah was suicidal. Job was bankrupt. Jeremiah was a crybaby. The disciples fell asleep while praying. Peter denied Jesus, and Paul was a persecutor of Christians!

Remember Jonah, in our first reading, was an escape artist. Even though he displeased the Lord by avoiding his mission, God called him back to bring His message to the people of Nineveh. Though unworthy, after graduation from elementary at the age of twelve, I decided to enter the seminary. In order to be qualified for the seminary formation I undertook a series of processes and steps: taking the entrance exam, letter of application, series of tests and interviews, recommendation from parish priest, academic records, baptismal and parents' marriage certificates, and many more. When I was accepted, I stayed in the seminary for several years of intensive formation which includes: four-years in high school, four-year philosophical and four-year theological studies, a year of spiritual-pastoral formation and a year of regency. Parish immersions where I was exposed to the harsh realities of life, engaging myself to the life situation of people and many more. This was to assess if I am physically, spiritually, mentally, and morally capable.

After almost 14 years of formation I successfully passed these processes and with the recommendation from my seminary formators with lots of prayer & reflection I sent a letter to my Archbishop telling him of my desire to be ordained to the order of priesthood.

When Jesus called His disciples they did not undergo this kind of process and formation. In today's gospel, Andrew and Simon are simply casting their nets in the Sea of Galilee while James and John are putting their nets in order when Jesus calls them, '*Come, follow me, I will make you fishers of men.*' Immediately they leave everything in the boat and follow Jesus. *That is instant, willing and ready!* They have their seminary formation with Jesus for only three years or less. They may be smelly fishermen, but they have a big heart to say, '*Yes!*' They immediately leave their nets and followed Jesus. His call changes their lives from being fishermen to becoming *fishers of men*. They who have worked to bring in fish from the sea will now be trained to catch people for the kingdom of God. The first disciples were models of a willing and generous response to Jesus' invitation. They ask no questions; they immediately leave everything behind.

Today Jesus continues to call generous men and women to follow him. The first disciples left everything to follow Jesus. *Are you ready to leave everything to answer Jesus' call?* To be with Jesus is to *learn from him, to draw strength from him and to know his Father*; this is our calling, *our commitment*. Then, and only then, can we go forth and

preach the Good News. To be a chosen disciple entails *communion*, which naturally *leads to mission*, as the joys of the Gospel are meant to be shared with others. Jesus says to those whom he called, “*I have chosen you to be with me.*” Then he adds, “*I will also send you out to preach.*” To those he called he made them his *disciples*, a Latin word which means ‘*learner or student.*’ Then Jesus makes them his *apostles*, a Greek word which means ‘*being sent.*’

What is true of the Twelve is true to all the baptized. We are ‘*called*’ to be ‘*sent.*’ The gospel is not for us to keep and enjoy but for us to share and encourage people to live according to the values that it brings us. To be fishers for men is *to talk to people, encourage them challenge them, convince them, move them and hold them.* To be fishers for the hungry, to bring peace for the troubled, to be joy for the lonely, to be strength for the weak, to be voice for the marginalized.

Today’s Gospel is not only about the four fishermen who left their nets to follow Jesus. This gospel is meant for us, too. *For Jesus’ call is urgent.* He says: “*This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.*” Jesus’ words convey a sense of necessity and a demand to follow Him. Our response to his kingdom, as his preaching demands, *is repentance.* The way repentance as envisioned by the Scripture involves our whole life, *not just our heart and emotion.* Repentance is a turning away *from one way of life and turning toward another.* Repentance is turning our attention from old

tasks at hand and giving full attention to the kingdom of God as Jesus leads the way for us.

Following Jesus often means changing some aspect of our lives. If we are going to be truly alive, we must be in a constant mode of conversion which is leaving the old self in the past and living according to the new self in Christ in the present. *Have you ever thought of responding? Believe that Jesus still works through ordinary people like you.* Let this be our prayer, *Lord, I'm only a spark, make me a fire...I'm only a drop of water, make me a fountain. I'm only a feather, make me a wing. What I ask Lord is that I may work for your glory, that I may love you and make others love you! Amen.*