

In today's Gospel, Jesus first asks Simon and Andrew, and then He asks James and John to follow Him. Jesus is inviting these men to take immediate action. The men lay down their fishing nets and respond to Jesus' invitation to follow Him. The *calling*, the *leaving*, and the *following*, these are the three dimensions of every serious Catholic person's life.

First, there is Jesus' *call*. As Jesus walks along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, many people are there. Out of all of them, Jesus looks at two brothers, Simon and Andrew, then on two other brothers, James and John. His eyes met theirs and He says, "Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of people." Jesus is calling them for a definite purpose. Jesus is also calling each one of us for a definite purpose.

We are called in Baptism for a purpose that nobody else can accomplish in quite the same way. Each of us has a story of our life, a journey to make, a call to answer that is uniquely our own. Jesus calls each of us individually as surely as He called Simon, Andrew, James and John. And Jesus calls us to fulfill His mission we received at our Baptism.

The second moment is *leaving* their nets behind. The Apostles have to leave behind their possessions, their families and friends, and make a personal commitment to undertake what Jesus asks of them. They will no longer have the security of their former lives. The Apostles' lives and hearts are totally transformed by answering Jesus' call to follow Him.

To follow Christ, we too have to leave behind the nets that entangle us, burden us and trap us. It would be tempting to imagine that if we just somehow could leave the world behind, all would be well. But would it? When the European explorers came to this continent, many were seeking a new world, a fresh beginning. As we know from our history though, that didn't happen because they brought a lot of the old world with them. It wasn't stowed away in their boats. It was in their hearts.

But before we're able to change the world around us, we need to change the world within us. What nets are we willing to leave behind for Christ, not in property but in our attitude and actions? From the fish's point of view, nets are traps which take away

the fish's freedom and lead to their death. To name a few nets that trap us, are we ready to abandon the nets of pornography and gossiping? Are we ready to abandon the nets of greed, anger, and the resentments or other sinful patterns that entangle us?

When we follow Jesus, we must abandon our nets. We must repent of any sinful patterns in our lives which have trapped us and brought about or endangered our spiritual death. Through repentance, we can be free to follow Jesus once again.

These are far more difficult nets for us to leave behind because we are so wrapped up in them. But when we do, it opens up a whole new world of living. It's like the repentance of the Ninevites in the Book of Jonah. When they repented, they still lived in the same city, but it was a different world. They were changed within themselves.

Jesus asks us to repent and believe in Him. By repenting, we not only ask for Jesus's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but make a promise to turn away from sin, to change our lives. Like the Apostles, we drop our nets and walk with Him.

Many years ago, when people had troubles in their life or wanted opportunity, they were told "Go West!" So often they took their problems with them because the real problem was not in the East but in their hearts. So, for us the problem is not where we live, but how we live; not how much we have, but what we do with it; not in finding the truth, but in embracing it.

To be a Catholic is not to simply to leave the world behind but to stay in the world as salt and light, and to use the things of the world differently than others do, for the sake of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. If we would keep our eyes fixed on Christ, then we would start to see marriage, family, school and work in a different light, as places where we can be a mirror of Christ's love to others.

Thirdly, the Gospel tells us that they *followed* Jesus. What does it mean to follow Our Blessed Lord? Obviously, it does not mean growing a beard, speaking Aramaic, or living in the Holy Land as Jesus did. To follow Jesus is much more than dressing like Jesus, or visiting the places where Jesus was. It is *being Jesus* to the people you meet and the culture around us.

Jesus is not telling us to abandon our jobs as the Apostles did. However, we are called to make everything else in our lives secondary to our discipleship. Each one of us is part of the Body of Christ, the Catholic Church. As such, we become part of the Church's mission of proclaiming and communicating Jesus to our family, to our community, to our world.

Jesus is calling you to follow Him. Will you say yes? Jesus will form you into one of His disciples who is capable of making a valuable difference in the world, just like the Apostles did in their hurting world. For most people, the call to discipleship comes in casual, everyday encounters with God and with one another. It calls us to an ever-deepening relationship with Our Lord. As beloved disciples, let us joyfully take up God's call to us and know that He is with us in all that we do and in all those people we meet each day.

What it does mean to follow Jesus in our world today? It means standing up for the sacredness of life, especially all human life from the moment of conception. To follow Jesus means trying to build bridges among people who can so easily divide into warring factions and cliques. It means speaking up for the truth about the role of money, power and position in human life and their capacity to distort human life.

It means guarding the holiness of marriage in a secular world that so easily sees commitments as temporary. It means guarding the importance of spiritual life in a world that would define our life by consumption or material possessions alone.

You may experience, or have already experienced, an interior nudging to reach out to those who are imprisoned by loneliness, suffering, a struggling marriage, raising children or care of the sick, or those who have fallen upon hard times. Other calls of discipleship may be to be more faithful to your prayer life or to be more present to those in your home.

As members of God's kingdom, *we all have unique gifts to offer*. When we answer God's call to do His will and follow Him, Jesus will form us into His disciples who are capable of making a difference in the world, just like the first Apostles did. If we seek to answer Jesus' call, our hearts will be changed and transformed over time. All God is looking for is your humble and open receptive heart. The Apostles left their nets and followed the Lord. So can we!