

Sunday January 24, 2021

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Parishioner Reflection

By: John and Rita lafrate

During these difficult days, how many times have we found ourselves focused on our everyday routines? Hours spent in Zoom meetings, cooking dinner for the family, doing the laundry, or any of the other mundane tasks which fill our days. Suddenly, there's an interruption and our focus is broken. Perhaps it's a ringing phone, or a child needing help with homework, or pets demanding our attention. For many of us, these small interruptions cause stress and annoyance. We get so caught up in our everyday lives, and all the pressures that the current-day pandemic presents, that any disruption to our routine causes mayhem.

In today's Gospel reading, the lives of the four fishermen Simon, Andrew, James, and John are also interrupted. The four find themselves in the midst of their everyday routines when they are called by Jesus. Summoned to a completely new vocation, they leave their belongings and families to immediately follow Him.

Jesus also had a vocation, from the Latin "vocatio" meaning "calling". After John the Baptist is arrested, Jesus must continue with God's plan for Him. He takes centre stage and calls out to all who will listen to hear the Good News, "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the Good News". And what is the Good News? It is that Jesus has arrived!

What if it were Jesus who interrupted us? Would we hear his call? Would we take the time to truly listen? How prepared would we be to leave behind all that we have to follow Him?

Our faith tells us to follow, just as the disciples did, but following Jesus does not always take us where we expect or want to go. So too the fishermen were called to an uncertain future, not knowing what lay ahead.

When we enter our calling, we have no idea how it will end. We choose our professions, or vocations, with the hope that we can use the gifts and talents that God has given us to proclaim the Good News. If one is to have blind faith, then one must trust that God is putting us on the right path. He knows our needs and

wants, and what is good for us, as in "commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will act." Psalm 37:5

Were they afraid? Probably, but for these four simple fishermen there was no wavering because they trusted the One who spoke to them, just as we give ourselves to He who speaks to us. We must trust in God's plan and give into it with surrender. This simple truth should be enough.

Many times we are gripped with feelings of unworthiness; who are we that God should choose us? When we feel unworthy, our deepest fear is that we are not good enough. God knows exactly how we feel and tells us "Fear not, for I am with you." (Isaiah 43:5) He is telling us not to be afraid, that we ARE worthy, and He will not abandon us.

In truth, you and I are not worthy. Our worth in life has nothing to do with our worldly selves (our power, wealth, and honour) and everything to do with God. Regardless of our past transgressions, whether or not we missed mass, or abandoned God for a short time, He is with us. God is our past, our present, and our future, transcending the limits of time. All we have to do is STOP and LISTEN for He calls us all by name, one by one, to go and evangelize the Good News.

In his recent Angelicus Reflection, Pope Francis emphasizes this idea when he noted that "*...before the Lord's call, which reaches us in a thousand ways, our attitude at times might be rejection, and at others, fear. But God's call is love and it should be responded to only with love.* He goes on to say, "*At the beginning, there is an encounter, or rather, there is the encounter with Jesus who speaks to us of His Father. He makes His love known to us. And then the spontaneous desire will arise even in us to communicate it to the people that we love.*"

May this week's Gospel reading allow us to reflect on how we might find the meaning in our lives, by entrusting ourselves to God's calling, to His love, and ridding ourselves of the fear that may linger in our hearts. We too can be "fishers of people", with a renewed and refreshed commitment to our own vocations and to our church family at Our Lady of Grace.