

Lectio Divina for Young People

Mark 1:14-20

In this scripture passage, St. Mark recounts the calling of Simon, Andrew, James, and John, four regular people whom Jesus calls to join him in his mission to make disciples of all nations, to become fishers of men. However, we shouldn't just read this as a story about past events. The call to the mission of evangelization is for all the baptized: "In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples" (Evangelii Gaudium, 120). We can identify four key themes in this scripture passage: Make, Urgency, Call and Response.

As Jesus walks along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he sees Simon and Andrew fishing. He calls to them: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Mk. 1:17). Jesus knows that he is not calling qualified men to follow him. In fact, Mark makes special note of the fact that "they were fishermen" (Mk. 1:16). Fishermen would not have been expected to be part of the well-educated class of society. They were not scholars of the law or Levites. They were simple, salt-of-the-earth people.

And yet, Jesus calls Simon and Andrew to drop their nets and follow him, promising to make them fishers of people. There is something significant about the use of the word "make" in this phrase. Jesus is not just calling them to follow him. He is promising that he will form them into the fishers of men that he desires for them to become. To make something requires forethought, planning, and intention. When you want to make something well, you think in advance about how it should be built. There is an end in mind, and planning and forethought that come before the making. In using this term "make," Jesus indicates to Simon and Andrew that he has an end in mind for them: to move from fishermen on the sea to becoming fishers of men for the whole world. There is a common saying that "the Lord doesn't call the qualified; he qualifies the called". **Here, we see Jesus calling two seemingly unqualified men on the promise that he will intentionally shape and mold them into the fishers of people he desires for them to become. In prayer, ask the Lord how he is shaping you as a missionary disciple.** Both sets of brothers in Mark's story respond with urgency to the Lord's call to follow him. Mark describes both responses as "immediate" (cf. Mk. 1:18, 20). The use of language evoking a sense of immediacy is characteristic of Mark's Gospel. This shouldn't lead us to think, however, that this is just a literary technique used by Mark. The fact that both sets of brothers were willing to leave their lives as fishermen to follow Jesus immediately should tell us something about the urgency of the mission.

In *Redemptoris Missio*, St. John Paul II wrote of the urgency of the Church's mission:

"The number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church is constantly on the increase. Indeed, since the end of the Council, it has almost doubled. When we consider this immense portion of humanity, which is loved by the Father and for whom he sent his Son, the urgency of the Church's mission is obvious" (Redemptoris Missio, 3).

Redemptoris Missio was written in 1990. For much of the world, certainly in North America and Europe, the number of “those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church” has certainly continued to increase in the last thirty-three years. There are also many places throughout the world where people have never had the opportunity to hear the Good News of Jesus. This should spur a renewed sense of urgency for the mission of evangelization. When we consider the vast number of souls who do not embrace the deep, personal, and intimate relationship with all three persons of the Holy Trinity, which is the very purpose of their lives, the urgency for each of us to respond to the call to evangelization should be obvious. Should we think that, perhaps, this urgent call to participate in the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (cf. Mt. 28:19-20) was for the apostles and is not directed at us, we should recall the words of St. Paul VI:

“Finally, the person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn” (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 24).

When Jesus calls, it is personal, unique, urgent and intentional. It was a personal call for these men, and it is a personal call to each of us. With the urgency of the mission in mind, each of us should ask ourselves: how is Jesus calling me to respond with immediacy to join him in making disciples of all nations? You might be hearing this call for the first time, or you might realize that this is what you have been feeling in your heart for a long time, but it’s time to go now.

Pause and put yourself in this scripture passage as you hear the call of Jesus to go: what are you feeling? What are you sensing? How is your heart responding as you are tired, sitting on a boat, and working many long days? What might the Lord be asking you to give up to follow him in this immediacy? It could be something big, like your job, your work, or your family, but it could also be something else, such as a particular sin in your life, or even something like deleting an app you waste time on so you can spend more time with him, or with a group of friends. Jesus calls you personally to follow him and invites you to be his missionary disciple today; he calls you where you are; you don’t need to be perfect, but like the early apostles, not ready Lord, but willing. This call is not based on your ability or religious devotion but on your willingness to respond. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis writes:

“In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt. 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization...Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization” (No. 120).

This passage calls you today to be a “fisher of people.” Reread the scripture and put your name where you read Simon, Andrew, James or John. What is holding you back from immediately responding to Jesus’ call to the mission of evangelization? Picture yourself as one of the apostles: when Jesus says to you, “Come follow me,” will you immediately follow?