

DISCIPLESHIP

How often do we hear but not listen?

Jonah heard the LORD ("Set out for the great city of Nineveh, and announce to it the message that I will tell you").

Jonah also listened to the Lord ("So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh, according to the LORD'S bidding").

The people of Nineveh heard and listened to Jonah ("when the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth").

Jesus proclaimed the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." Who listened?

Simon and his brother Andrew listened. James and his brother John listened. Jesus called them and immediately they abandoned their nets and followed him.

I remember a wonderful definition of discipleship: Discipleship = Prayer and Reflection + Purposeful Involvement.

Prayer. Admittedly, I need to be constantly reminded of this maxim on prayer: "Everyone of us needs half an hour of prayer every day, except when we are busy – then we need an hour." In prayer I am more vulnerable. In prayer I am prone to hearing the voice of God. In the stillness of reflection, maybe I can listen to a call to discipleship.

It wasn't the impulsive natures of the brothers that led them immediately to leave fish and family. They were probably devout Jews given to prayer, open to the voice of calling, and ready to engage.

Are we ready to live the Gospel? Is there a burning, a fire, a mission that is the core of our lives and gets us up in the morning? Although we don't know exactly what that fire within the brothers was, we can assume that within each were the smoldering embers of some greater purpose. By calling them, Jesus fanned these embers.

Jesus was also a devout Jew given to prayer, which prepared him for his mission. The arrest of John the Baptist provided the spark, whereupon he began preaching and prophesying, calling and gathering, organizing and sending.

The brothers heard the call, listened, and gathered. They were the first disciples. But not the last. "For the world in its present form is passing away." All we have to do is listen.

(Based on the Readings for the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time)

