

SESSION 17: CALLED

TOPIC: Foundations of Discipleship

KEY CONCEPTS

If we look at the example of the disciples, we see that we must first get to know Jesus by spending time with Him. It is through time spent with Him that the disciples learned His teachings and built an intimate friendship with Him, which allowed them to love and worship Him.

The Church has given us the tools we need to live out our call to discipleship. We find our strength and courage in the Sacraments of Confirmation, Reconciliation, and the Eucharist.

Jesus is calling each of us to be a disciple. By spending time in prayer, frequenting the sacraments, and using our gifts to glorify God, we can become the disciples we are called to be.

KEY TERMS

Disciples: Those who accepted Jesus' message to follow Him. Jesus associated His disciples with His own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to the disciples, and gave them a share in His mission, His joy, and His sufferings.

Sacrament: An efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE

Mark 1:16-20

Mark 3:13-19

Matthew 10

CATECHISM

562

1303-1305

TEACHING

Calling of the Disciples

Sometimes as we read the Bible, we think about the people as storybook characters. It can be hard to imagine them as real men and women, but the truth is that when we read the Gospels, we are reading about people who lived and walked this Earth. However, we do not take this simply on faith, as there is historical evidence that Jesus and His disciples walked and preached over 2,000 years ago.

The men and women we read about in the Bible are just as real as you and I. If you visit Rome, you will walk the streets where Sts. Peter and Paul walked. As I read the following passage from the Gospel of Mark, imagine you are one of the disciples; not simply story book characters, but normal human beings.

Read Mark 1:16-20

What do you notice about these men? What makes these seemingly ordinary fishermen extraordinary?

As you were imagining yourself in that story did you think, “*That is crazy! They do not even know this man?*”? Did you think about the fact that fishing was their livelihood, that they had families and friends, that there were things they loved about where they lived? And yet, “immediately they left their nets and followed Him.”

Mark 1:18

We learn later in the Gospel that these men were far from perfect. But in this encounter, these imperfect men immediately followed Jesus. Their haste is the start of their discipleship. Although they would continue to stumble on their walk with Jesus, these imperfect, searching men were the ones Jesus called to be His disciples, His most intimate friends.

Mark 10:35-40, 14:66-72

Becoming a Disciple

We are each called to be disciples, just like Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, and the other apostles. As you read the Gospels, it is clear that people knew of Jesus. Lots of people gathered to hear Him preach or waited among the crowd in the hope of catching a glimpse of Him. It would be hard to find somebody in the United States who has never heard of Jesus, but simply knowing of Jesus does not make you a disciple.

Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John immediately followed Jesus, even though they did not know Him well. They did not have that intimate friendship with Him that they would later have. And yet, they went with Him. They spent time with Him and got to know Him. This is how all relationships begin.

Think about your best friend. You most likely did not become best friends at first sight, as deep friendships take time to form. We are also called to spend time with the Lord, especially through

prayer — putting ourselves in the presence of the Lord. That is what prayer is, putting ourselves in the presence of the Lord. A regular prayer life is one of the most essential elements of discipleship. Our discipleship must begin with this time with the Lord. As we get to know Him more, we will become more like Him. Our hearts and lives will be converted to His own.
CCC 1248, 2558-2559, 2565, 2626-2643, 2705-2719

As the disciples got to know Jesus, they heard His teachings, asked questions, and ultimately, had to decide if they believed Him. Some of Jesus' teaching were hard for the disciples to accept, but ultimately, they believed He spoke the truth.
John 6:60-69

The disciples continued to grow in their relationship with Jesus. They were no longer following a strange man, but their intimate friend. The more Jesus taught them, the more they learned what it meant to love and worship God.

The Tools for Discipleship

As we see in the Gospel of Mark, discipleship is not easy. The fishermen had to cast down their nets; they had to leave their livelihood, families, and everything they knew to follow Jesus. However, Jesus left us the Church and the sacraments to give us the strength and courage to follow Him.

The Sacrament of Confirmation is a great tool that will help you live out your call to discipleship. The graces of Confirmation will allow you to know Jesus more deeply.

Read CCC 1303.

Through the Sacrament of Confirmation, you will be united more firmly to Christ, your bond with the Church will be more perfect, and your baptismal graces will be increased and deepened.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is another great tool the Church gives us. We are imperfect, just like the men Jesus called to follow Him, but the Sacrament of Reconciliation allows us to confess our sins and be made new. Just as Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John had to cast down their nets, we too have to cast down our sins and vices so we are able to truly be in the Lord's presence and become more like Him.

The Mass is the greatest of all of the tools the Lord has given us to become disciples. It is in the Mass that we receive our Lord in the Eucharist. As we consume Him — Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity — we are transformed into Christ Himself. The Mass is the highest form of prayer. At the Mass, heaven reaches down to Earth and we are invited into the worship of God that is happening in heaven.

CCC 1324-1327, 1374, 2177

Through the Mass, we also encounter the communion of saints. These men and women are present with us during the liturgy. When Jesus calls us to be His disciples, He does not expect us to be exactly the same. In the communion of saints, we see that the call to be a disciple is not simply for one type of person. The saints make up a diverse crowd: people of all races and nationalities, rich and poor. There are scholars like St. Thomas Aquinas, lawyers like St. Thomas More, teachers like St. John Bosco, fathers and mothers like Sts. Louis and Marie Zélie Martin.

Include other saints who have impacted your life or the life of your parish.

God gave each of these saints different gifts to live out their discipleship. As they became more like Christ, they became more fully who they were created to be. They were able to use their gifts to worship and glorify God in their own unique ways.

What Does This Mean for You, Right Now?

So, how do you start living out your call to discipleship? First, you must lay down your nets. What is stopping you from following Jesus? What sins are making it hard for you to respond to His call? What relationships are preventing you from giving yourself to the Lord?

Second, you must make prayer a part of your daily life. In order to hear the Lord's call, you must quiet yourself. Spend time in prayer each day. Turn off your cell phone and sit in silence, read your Bible, or pray the rosary. It does not matter what your prayer looks like as long as you put yourself in the presence of God. As you commit to prayer, you will come to know Jesus more intimately. You will develop a greater understanding of His teachings, learn to listen to what He says, and begin to see Him not just as a historical man, but as a man alive and calling you.

Third, you must frequent the sacraments. Call on the graces of your baptism and confirmation. Purify your heart through Reconciliation. Receive the Eucharist regularly. As you enter into prayer and the sacraments, you will become conformed to Christ, which will allow you to love Jesus as He loved the Father. As you become conformed to Christ, you will see the gifts He gave you more clearly. You will see how your uniqueness can allow you to glorify Him — whether it is serving Him through your school work, sports, artwork, or in the way you treat your family and friends. He made you specifically who you are; He made you to be a disciple. He wants you to drop your nets and follow Him so you can be the disciple you are meant to be.

CCC 562

BREAK

Discussion (15 min)

Read Mark 1:16-20 once more and then use the following questions to facilitate a discussion:

- How do you think Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John felt when the Lord asked them to follow Him?
- What would be the hardest things for you to give up if the Lord called you to leave everything and follow Him, right now?
- What nets do you hold onto that you know the Lord wants you to put down? Do you have sins or vices that you have not been able to give up, friendships or relationships that are preventing you from following the Lord, or gifts that you are using for your glory instead of for His glory?
- How can you more closely follow Jesus?
- What tools does the Church give you to live a life of discipleship? Have you taken advantage of these tools? Why or why not?

SEND

Commissioning (15 min)

We are each called to be a disciple of Christ. Although He calls us by name, most of us have nets that make it difficult for us to follow. Today, you have the opportunity to lay down your nets, to place them at the foot of the cross. Take a few moments to reflect on your nets; truly prepare your heart to lay them down before Christ so you can follow Him and live the life of discipleship you are called to. When you feel ready, come and place your collage at the foot of the cross, offering your nets, your sins and vices, your relationships, and your gifts to the Lord.

You have left your nets at the cross. You have given your vices, sins, relationships, and gifts to the Lord. What happens next is important. Will you get to know the Lord more deeply? Will you enter into an intimate friendship with the one who has called you by name? He longs to hear you answer "yes" to His call.

Lord, you call each of us to leave our vices, sins, relationships, and gifts at your feet, to become your disciples. This is a great call, a true honor, and yet, it can sometimes be difficult. Give us your grace and strength so we can answer your call, daily. Helps us leave behind our nets, follow you, and grow in our love of you. May we follow in your footsteps and live our lives as true disciples, glorifying you in everything we do and with everything we are. Amen.