

Piece: *The Calling of the First Apostles*, circa 1481–83
Artist: Domenico Ghirlandaio
Location: Sistine Chapel



His First Followers

We began the Church year with the foundations of our Christian life. We focused on our baptismal call to preach the word of God. Now we focus on the call of the first apostles.

Today's painting is again from the Sistine Chapel, where Ghirlandaio based this scene on today's Gospel. The Sea of Galilee spreads out behind Jesus, who is once again front and center. Several towns line the shore and remind us of Capernaum, where Jesus lived and near where he called his first followers.

Two apostles kneel in front of Jesus; another pair stand behind him. Their gestures and postures reveal their interior attitudes. One apostle crosses his arms in acceptance while another prayerfully looks up at

Jesus. The third apostle, behind Jesus, has his hand at his chest as if to say, "Are you sure you want me?" The fourth seems to look away. Many others surround Jesus, but not all of them are called to be apostles.

The call of Jesus is real. He may not ask us to leave behind our business or family, but he does ask for the same totality of trust and following. The result of fully saying "yes" to this call is what the first reading proclaims: "You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing; They rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest..." (Isaiah 9:2). The "joy of the

gospel" that Pope Francis proclaimed in his 2013 apostolic exhortation is exactly this: that joy that comes from a sincere and generous "yes" to Jesus' call to be a disciple.

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

For Reflection

Jesus asks us to leave all and put him first. How can I do that better this week?

"At once they left their nets and followed him" (Matthew 4:20).