

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, JANUARY 24,
2021

THE DIFFERENCE YOU CAN MAKE BY ANSWERING
GOD'S CALL.

Last Sunday's readings spoke about God's call and presented Samuel, Andrew, and unnamed disciple, Peter, as examples of those who answered God's call. Reflecting on the readings, we come to the conclusion that God's call does not stop with these names. He calls each one of us by name. "Thus, says the LORD, who created you, Jacob and formed you Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

If we accept that God calls each one of us, would it be wise to ignore that call? Can we pretend that it does not matter? What difference does it make if we answer His call? It is not neither safe nor wise to ignore God's call. To ignore the call is totally contrary to our nature. It is like a suicide. To ignore God's call or pretend there is nothing is to shortchange ourselves. We come from God's hands and he made us for a purpose. "He destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will" (Ephesians 1:5). To ignore His call is to deny the purpose of our creation. To deny that call is an open invitation to misery, disaster and death. To ignore God's plan for your life is like putting a mask over your eyes instead of your nose and mouth and jump into your car and drive on the highway 1-240. It would also be like gulping down a gallon of sanitizer instead of using a little bit of it to sanitize your hand. God's call began

before we came into being. He called out of nothingness to existence. He called us out of darkness into his own wonderful light. No wonder, St Augustine exclaimed, "You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until the rest is in thee"(Confession 1, 3).

Answering God's call makes a great difference. Let us see how this is true in the life of Jonah and the disciples called from the Sea of Galilee to be apostles to the nations. When Jonah was first called, he ignored the call and took a dive into an opposite direction. He ended up in the belly of the whale where he repented. Jonah later embraced the call by going to Nineveh to announce the message God had given him. The outcome of his mission was the repentance of the whole nation beginning from the king to the regular Joes and Sheilas. This saved the nations from disaster that would have befallen them because of their sins. The Bible says, "When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them; he did not carry it out" (Jonah 3:10).

Four apostles, Andrew, Peter, James and John answered God's call and it changed their lives and the world. These men were fishermen. When the Lord came to them at the seashore, he told them to follow him. They left everything and followed Jesus. They were changed from being fishermen to fishers of men. From the men who knew how to bring fish out of water to men who knew how to bring other men out of the sea of confusion and craziness of life to the beauty and order of life in Christ. These together with eight others - Philip, Bartholomew, James the son Alphaeus, Thomas, Simon the zealot, Jude, Judas - became the

foundation of the new worldwide family Christ established. That family is the Catholic Church. Scriptures speak of the place of the Apostles, "You are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone" (Ephesians 2:20). Describing the structure of this Holy city fashioned by God, the Bible says, "The wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation, on which were inscribed the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:14).

Among the first four apostles to be called Andrew was the first. He told Peter, his brother, about the lord and brought him to Jesus. Later, Andrew took the gospel to Achaia, in Greece and gave glory to God on an X-shaped cross. The Blessed Mother was entrusted to the care of John (John 19.27). Peter became the first Pope, James went to Spain and the Iberian Peninsula, and spread the good news of the Lord. He was the first to give his life for Christ. He was martyred by Herod Agrippa in 44 AD. Together these men sowed the seeds of faith. They evangelized the world. We are Catholics thanks to their labors of love. They are the giants upon whose shoulders we stand.

Is there any impact you can make as a Catholic in our time? Can you make a difference by answering God's call? Yes, you can. When Jonah preached in Nineveh, "the people of Nineveh believed God and proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth" (Jonah 3:5). You can save your classmates from going to hell by introducing them to Jesus. You can convert your boyfriend and you will have one faith, one hope,

one baptism and one Lord in your family. Through you, your wife can become Catholic. As a lay person do you have a stake in evangelization? Yes, you do. "Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it" (CCC 900). Is there a particular message or action that can save life the Lord is nudging you to embrace? Two things events are tugging at us this week. It is an octave prayer for Christian Unity and it is also the week of the Legal Protection of the Unborn.

When you feel confused about what could be your specific vocation in the Church, think of what St. Thérèse de Lisieux said, "Overcome by joy, I cried, 'Jesus, my love. At last, I have found my vocation. My vocation is love. In the heart of the Church, my mother, I will be love, and then I will be all things."

"May the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, Jesus our Lord, furnish you with all that is good, that you may do his will. Through Jesus Christ may he carry out in you all that is pleasing to him" (Hebrew 13:20-21).