

JANUARY 24, 2021
Sunday of the 3rd Week in OT
Mark 1: 14-20

“LORD, I WILL FOLLOW YOU.”

“There was once a holy rabbi who lived in a town where the houses of the rich stood in an isolated area so that they had to hire men to watch over their property at night. Late one evening as the rabbi was coming home, he met a watchman walking up and down. ‘For whom are you working?’ the rabbi asked. The man told him and then inquired in his turn, ‘And for whom are you working, rabbi?’ The words struck the rabbi like a shaft. ‘I am not working for anyone just now,’ he barely managed to say. Then he walked up and down beside the man for a long time. ‘Will you be my servant?’ he finally asked. ‘I should like to,’ the man replied, ‘but what would be my duties?’ ‘To ask me that question every now and then,’ said the rabbi. It’s a question each of us might ask ourselves every now and then: Who or what am I working for?”¹

In our first reading, we heard about the calling of Prophet Jonah, a disobedient, reluctant prophet who flee and turn around to God when he was called to preach in Nineveh. Whenever Jonah says no, God do something to make Jonah think and reconsider his response. He always went in the opposite direction, choosing to escape the Lord’s authority, mandate, or command, with disastrous outcomes. Until such time that Jonah even swallowed by the whale to be in Nineveh and preach repentance. Jonah avoided, turn around, and disobey the Lord but God never give up until Jonah said yes, repented, preached, and brought back the people of Nineveh to God. From being a reluctant preacher, not sure what will happen to him or will the people believe in him, to an obedient and perfect example of giving all for God. While in our gospel, we heard about the powerful invitation of Jesus to His first four disciples: “As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw

¹ Flor McCarthy in Sundays and Holy Day Liturgies, www.stories4homilies.co

James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.”² What a powerful word: I will make you fishers of men, an invitation that makes us think and rediscover ourselves. Maybe like Jonah we can say ‘Is this real? How can I live and follow you everyday if I experienced nothingness, emptiness, vacuum and imperfection?’ My brothers and sisters “Jesus sees us and calls us by name to leave behind, the things that we are used to, the things that we feel we cannot live without, the things that we sometimes feel are our life. This is the call to conversion that often is very difficult. “Surely, the Lord is not asking me to change something that is so much a part of my life?” “Lord you are asking for the impossible, ask me anything else, not this!” Yet the Lord does not force us or threaten us with disaster if we do not respond. He is ready to wait for us to change and do what will ultimately be the best for us. Conversion should not be seen as a ‘giving up’ but a ‘giving into his hands.’ We change so that we might follow him. Our conversion is seen in our readiness to act for Him and for His kingdom.”³

My brothers and sisters, what is our answer to His call? Am I ready to answer the call of Jesus and follow Him? What are the things that limit in following Him? Are my personal relationships, anxieties, ambitions or not trusting Him blocking the way? St. Paul is reminding us in the Second Reading: live in total freedom, detachment and disconnect ourselves to this world and relate to the Lord. “Nothing we have, whether things or personal attachments, are permanent and can disappear at a moment’s notice. Whether life is very good or very bad: nothing lasts except the fundamental values of truth and love, of freedom and justice. It is what we are, not what we have that counts.”⁴

Let this be our prayer: “Lord Jesus, free me from any attachments in this world and focus on Your ways not on my own. Give me strength to follow your call and be prepared to go wherever You want me to go. Amen.”

² Mark 1: 14-20 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

³ Fr. Jude Botelho, www.stories4homilies.co

⁴ livingspace.sacredspace.ie