

CALLED AND SENT: 3RD SUNDAY B

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In our various communities we are fortunately not all the same. We have health workers, lawyers, tradespeople, teachers and students. There are those who work more than one job, and those who simply cannot find work. There are adults and children, retired and semi-retired persons, family persons and single ones, those born here and those born overseas, sick people and healthy, carers and cared-for. There are big picture persons and those with attention to detail. There are passive people and there are active ones. There are those strong on theory and those that make things happen. There are those who talk a lot and those that do a lot. There are those who think a great deal and those who cannot concentrate.

For all our differences there are two things we have in common, which we treasure. We are human beings together and we are Christians together. We have been baptized by Jesus (through his Church) and have become his disciples. Within our different situations we keep striving to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus along the road of life and keep walking in his footsteps. What he has called us to be and to do become clearer from today's gospel story.

Mark (1:16-20) relates that as soon as Jesus began his work in Galilee, he recruited Simon and his brother Andrew, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, to be his companions and to work with him to make God's loving rule happen over everybody and everything. Mark tells us that there and then they left their occupations and their families to live out his call. Such was the magnetism of his personality and the attraction of his call to mission, which Jesus describes as making them '*fishers of people*'!

The word '*disciple*' in the gospels means '*learner*'. We note that his followers did not choose Jesus as their teacher. No, he took the initiative. He chose them to learn from him as life-long learners within a life-long relationship with him. As they journeyed around with him, they would experience his kindness, compassion and pastoral care over and over again towards thousands of sufferers in need of healing and deliverance from physical, mental, or emotional illness. To his followers he would tell his parables and other most important teachings. They were to share his life-style, sufferings and hardships. Sometimes they, like their Leader, would even find themselves without a roof over their heads and sleeping rough.

But despite the trust and affection Jesus gives his disciples, they don't come through the pages of the gospels as larger than life heroes who effectively and efficiently promote and expand the mission of Jesus. We note his first choices are, in fact, a bunch of uneducated fishermen, and the rest of his eight later choices hardly stand out as simply the best for the job. At times they misunderstand Jesus so badly that they come through as dull and stupid,

thick as bricks. For all that, we recognise that they are the ones Jesus deliberately and personally chose to share his mission of bringing in the kingdom (the rule and reign) of God.

All this leaves you and me with a great deal of hope. Jesus has picked us, with all our faults and failings but with all our potential, to be on his Coming of the Kingdom Team. Right now we are even his team of the century.

The first thing to emphasize about that is that he needs us. His mission in our world will not happen without us. To illustrate! A poor boy in a ghetto was being teased by another boy who said, *'If God loves you, why doesn't he take care of you? Why doesn't God tell someone to bring you shoes, a warm coat and better food?'* The little lad thought for a moment. Then, with tears in his eyes he answered, *'I guess God does tell somebody, but somebody forgets.'*

The beauty of the call of Jesus to each of us, communicated by his connecting us to him at baptism, means that each of us may think and say this: *'He has chosen me not because of any merits and achievements on my part, but simply because he loves me and wants me on his Kingdom of God team. I have been chosen, not because I am more virtuous, more gifted, or more suited than someone else, but only because he loves me and wants me.'*

This means that for the mission of Jesus, which is the mission of God, I have a place in God's plan. I am someone; I am a partner; I have a part to play; my life counts. Thank God for that!

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