

Every person is called to follow the Lord

Story of Elisha: In today's first reading we hear about the greatest prophet in the Old Testament, Elijah, who has stood up against a corrupt king and his pagan wife. He is growing old and needs to find someone to take his place. God sends to anoint Elisha who is to succeed him as prophet to Israel. Elijah found Elisha plowing the field with a team of 12 oxen. He wants to anoint Elisha as the new prophet, but Elisha says to Elijah, "Let me go back and kiss my father and mother good bye and I will follow you." Elijah says in disdain, "Go back!" Elisha responds, "Have I done anything to you?" Then Elijah slaughters the 12 oxen, cooked them using the wood from the yoke around their necks to make a fire, and gave the food to his relatives in the fields. He better not go home now! He follows Elijah.

Every person is called to wholeheartedly follow the Lord

Soren Kierkegaard once said that what Jesus wants is followers not admirers. He's right. To admire Jesus and all the great things he has done without changing our lives does nothing for Jesus or for us.

Every human person is called to radically change our lives follow the Lord

Yet how exactly does one follow Jesus? How do you do it?

- **Not by looking like Jesus. long hair, white garment, bare feet.**
- **Not simply by copying his actions.**

Some people think: Jesus did certain things, so we should do them too. For instance, he taught, healed, consoled the downtrodden, went off into the desert by himself, stayed up all night occasionally and prayed, and visited the homes of sinners. So many people think we should do the same things: We should become teachers, nurses, preachers, counselors, monks, social workers, and non-judgmental friends to the less-than-pious. In this view, imitation is carrying on the actions of Jesus.

This kind of imitation, however valuable as ministry, still is not quite what is required in terms of real radical discipleship. In the end, it too misses the point because one can be preacher of the gospel and not really be imitating Jesus, just as someone can be a truck driver and truly imitate him. Yes, truly following Christ is not a question of trying to look like Jesus, nor even of trying to duplicate his actions.

Yet fundamentally, each and every person IS called to follow the Lord

How then to we do it? We enter real discipleship, we become a real follower when, like Jesus, our motivation the desire for all we do is to draw all things into one—into one unity of heart, one family of love. And how do we do that?

**First, we read scripture in order to know the heart and mind of God
Second, we enter into prayer and ask to desire what God desires.**

(I experienced a pretty good example of people being true followers of the Lord this past week. 320 participated in the Catholic Heart Camp gathered in the Detroit area this past week. They came from eight Midwest states, many from small towns or country parishes.

- Experiencing the words of today's scriptures, As today's scripture, they had no place to put their head (24 of them in each classroom on sleeping bags).**
- They left their mothers and fathers and just about all their teen age creaturely comforts for a week.**
- They came to share the loving touch of God in troubled places of the Detroit area not knowing what would be asked of them.**
- 24 of them were assigned to work here at Corpus Christi to help clean O'Hair Park and pick up illegal trash dumped in our neighborhoods.**

- **They shoveled a large garbage piles which were often filled with maggots.**
- **They spent four days working in the streets of Detroit mixing with a people of a different racial make up, and income level from their own.**
- **They were totally committed to the work (explain)**
 - **4 days**
 - **Three dumpsters**
 - **Community garden**

At least for last week these teens had “left everything to follow him.”

(Pause)

Yes, each and every one of us is called to follow the Lord, to live a life of love and holiness. These teens reminded me that answering that call can't wait for later, wait for whatever else I think needs to happen first in my life. Jesus' message in today's gospel is very clear. Drop what you are doing; leave those who are delaying your call, and come and follow in my footsteps. There is no place for delaying when the Lord calls. The Lord's call has to be answered now.

Jesus came to announce in word and deed that the Kingdom of God is breaking through NOW. There is no tomorrow. Now is the time to follow the Lord with total commitment.

Let me leave you with a few powerful lines of a poem by J. Janda.

- **“leave all” said Jesus
“then**
- **come, follow me”**
- **but, Jesus,
they
will think I’m
crazy.**
- **“I know” said He (poem by J. Janda)**