

The Gospel describes how Jesus called Simon Peter, and his brother Andrew, and two other brothers, James and John. Their calling was unique; they were to be among that select group known as the twelve Apostles, the foundation on which Christ would build His Church. In the words of St. Paul, the Church is “...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone” (Eph 2:20).

These men made their living as fishermen. And it was on the occasion of casting their nets into the sea that Jesus chose to call them. This was to drive home the meaning and purpose of their vocation. They were to be “fishers of men”. Simon Peter and Andrew, without any hesitation, abandoned their nets, and James and John, abandon their boat and left their father, Zebedee.

No one would ever respond like that to a stranger.

These men certainly knew the Lord. They heard Him preach, and we can reasonably assume that they’d had a number of conversations with Him. None of this is recounted in the Scriptures; it’s simply assumed. What is important, then, is the meaning and purpose of their calling, and how they responded to the Lord.

Their calling consisted of a special mission as apostles. They had an exceptional role to play in the Church. And it required of them the total abandonment of their lives to the Lord. This abandonment is the call to holiness. While we were not called to be one of the twelve, we are no less called to abandon ourselves to the Lord. We have no less a calling to be holy than the apostles or anyone else.

Some years ago, I was at a religious profession for a third-order Franciscan. At the reception that followed,

someone asked me if I was going to be a priest. I said, “If God wills it”, to which he replied, “Well, then, you have to be holy”. It is a mistaken idea, that somehow one must be holy simply because one is a priest. The implication is that if you are not called to be priest, you are not called to be holy, or that there is some lesser degree of holiness that is required of you. This isn’t true. There are *not* two Gospels, the Serious Gospel and the Mediocre Gospel. There is not one Gospel for the *exceptional* Christian and another Gospel for the *ordinary* Christian. There is, in fact, no such thing as an ordinary Christian.

Have you ever noticed that Jesus addresses the apostles, themselves, on just a few occasions? He gives them authority to teach, to lose and bind, to forgive sins and preside

of the Eucharist. And he tells them a parable about their punishment, if they neglect their duty or do evil things (Matt 24: 47-51). Beyond that, everything else in the Gospel applies equally to every one of us. When Jesus says, “Be holy as your heavenly Father is holy” (Matt 5:48), He is speaking to everyone. The same is true of St. Paul when he speaks of holiness. The call to holiness is universal. It does not come from ordination or from monastic or religious vows, or anything else, but baptism. Baptism is our call to holiness, and it is the source of the saving grace that makes us holy. As the Apostles Peter says, “Baptism... now saves you” (1 Pet 3:21).<sup>1</sup>

Each of us has our own, particular calling in life from the Lord, but the call to holiness is for all people, for all times and places. So, just as the apostles found their path to

---

<sup>1</sup> “God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you” (1 Pet 3:20-21)

holiness in being apostles, we find out path to holiness in whatever life Jesus has called us to live. We see this innumerable times in the lives of the saints. Their path to holiness was in the concrete circumstances of their lives. This is the reason that the lives of the saints are so diverse. You will find saints from every walk of life, from the simplest of persons to the greatest of intellects, from the poorest to the wealthiest, from the very young to the very old, from peasants to kings.

Consider, then, your state in life at this moment, with all of its details and circumstances. It is here that you will find your path to holiness. How can this be? According to St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans,

...we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose [...] What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? (Rom 8:28, 31).

You can find holiness, you can become a saint, by being faithful to the ordinary things in your life, by doing those things for the Lord, for love of Him. Here again, St. Paul says,

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Co 10:31).

And in another place, he says, “Whatever you do, do it...as serving the Lord and not men” (Col 3:23).

Take stock, then, of all the things that you do from day to day. Whether you are making decisions that affect the lives of many people, or washing dishes, do it for the love of God. Offer it all to him, with all of your joys and sorrows. Look to Him, that He would make all of these things work toward your good, toward your holiness. The day-to-day routine, that at times, seems so mundane and monotonous, can be transformed. Even those who try your patience are the means by which you can be a saint and enter into heaven. You might

not always feel consolation or the closeness of the Lord in the midst of these things, but if you offer it all to the Lord, you can be sure that these things will purify your soul of self-centerless and pride.

Jesus put up with us. He suffered with us, and for us, and was humble even when we were putting Him to death. And through this, He saved the world. Surely, He can take the little things that we do each day, the little troubles that we have to face, and use these things to make us holy, to save us. But even if our trials and sufferings are great, He is the conqueror, the victor over all our sorrows, both now and at the hour of our death. St. Paul was totally convinced of this.

He says,

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? [...] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor

angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:35, 37-39).

May I propose something to you? Pick one thing this coming week that you will do for the glory of God. Think of all that Jesus did and all that he accepted for your sake. Take that one thing this week, and unite it to what Jesus did. If it is something that is difficult, then unite that to the difficulties that Jesus accepted for love of you. It does not need to be anything great. Maybe it is as simple as getting out of bed, right away, when it is time to get up. At that moment, say to Jesus,

My Lord, I offer this moment to you. I offer you my tiredness and I unite it to you. Unite my fatigue to those moments when you were fatigued from preaching and teaching, from healing the sick and forgiving sins. I unite my little trouble to you as you were worn out with sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemane. Give me the grace to accept this moment

just as you said to the Father, “Not my will but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

Make it your practice, then, to constantly offer the details of your life to the Lord, both your joys and your sorrows, your labor and rest. If you do this, with sincerity of heart, how could you not find yourself close to Jesus and He, close to you? You, sharing in His life, and He, sharing in your life, how could you not find yourself advancing in holiness?

Jesus has a path to holiness in mind for you, no matter how young or how old you may be. If you are a young person, however, it is a special time for you to discern your primary calling in life, your vocation. As your life unfolds, pray, and listen to the Lord as He speaks to your heart and through the people and events of your life. And when you see His hand guiding you, when you hear Him calling you, saying to you, “Come after me”, then, be like Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, drop all that you are doing, and without hesitation,

abandon yourself to Him. Respond to Him with your whole heart. Entrust yourself to Jesus. He knows what will give you true peace and happiness, what will lead you to holiness and eternal life.