
Session 2

The Call

Focus

We are called to be disciples. We must, therefore, first be good stewards of our own vocations—discerning, accepting, and fulfilling the roles and responsibilities to which the Lord has called us.

Sharing Experience

BACKGROUND

The Second Vatican Council had this advice about our Christian vocation: "Every person should walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of a living faith which arouses hope and works through charity" (*Lumen Gentium*, 41). In the stewardship pastoral, the American bishops took up this same theme of personal vocation, saying, "The Christian vocation is essentially a call to be a disciple of Jesus . . . Jesus' call is urgent. He does not tell people to follow him at some time in the future but here and now—at this moment, in these circumstances. There can be no delay.

"Becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ leads naturally to the practice of stewardship. These linked realities, discipleship and stewardship, then make up the fabric of a Christian life in which each day is lived in an intimate, personal relationship with the Lord . . . Refracted through the prisms of countless individual vocations, this way of life embodies and expresses the one mission of Christ: to do God's will, to proclaim the good news of salvation, to heal the afflicted, to care for one's sisters and brothers, to give life—life to the full—as Jesus did.

"Following Jesus is the work of a lifetime. At every step one is challenged to go further in accepting and loving God's will" (*Stewardship*, 12-14).

QUESTION

Do you believe that you are "called"? What experiences in your life have reinforced or validated your faith in that call?

Listening to the Word

INVOCATION

Begin the reading of the Scriptures with this short prayer (or another of your own choosing) followed by a few moments of silence: **Lord, help us to hear Your voice and know Your will for us as we read these holy Scriptures. Amen.** Then read the passages aloud.

Jeremiah 1:4-8

The word of the LORD came to me
thus:
Before I formed you in the womb
I knew you,
before you were born I dedicated you,
a prophet to the nations I appointed you.
"Ah, Lord God!" I said,
"I know not how to speak; I am too young."
But the LORD answered me,
Say not, "I am too young."
To whomever I send you, you shall go;
whatever I command you, you shall speak.
Have no fear before them,
because I am with you to deliver you,
says the LORD.

John 1:35-50

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means

Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus.

He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; You will be called Kephas" (which is translated Peter).

The next day he decided to go to Galilee and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth." But Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him." Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree." Nathanael said to him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel." Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this."

BACKGROUND

The call of Jesus is always unique and personal. Indeed, God says to Jeremiah that he had appointed him a prophet before he was even conceived! And God will not accept Jeremiah's protestations that he is too young to accept the call—there are people to whom Jeremiah must go, words that Jeremiah alone must speak for God's will to be accomplished. The prophets of the Old Testament, the disciples of the New Testament, and even we ourselves are not summoned as a faceless crowd, but as unique and unrepeatable individuals. "How did you know me?" Nathaniel asks Jesus. "Before Philip called

you, I saw you under the fig tree," comes the answer! Jesus knows our personal histories, our strengths, and our weaknesses; He has a particular purpose in mind for each one of us. "Only in the unfolding of the history of our lives and its events is the eternal plan of God revealed to each of us" (*Christifideles Laici*, 58).

Yet this unique call is not heard in isolation. John the Baptist showed his two disciples, one of whom was Andrew, the way to Jesus, the Lamb of God. Andrew followed Jesus and brought Simon Peter and Philip. Philip, in turn, brought Nathanael. In our time, too, others within the community of the faith help us discern, accept, and live out our vocations. We then, like those first disciples, help others to hear the voice of the Lord in their lives and respond.

Sharing the Word

QUESTIONS

(Read the Scriptures again silently; then share your responses to these questions:)

- Jeremiah protested that he was too young to answer God's call. What are some reasons why I might hesitate to respond to the Lord's call?
- Who in my life has been an outstanding example of one who has heard the call of God and answered it? How has he or she exemplified good stewardship?
- Who has helped me—in my family, on the job, in the Church—to understand and to live out the call of God in my life? How?

Prayer

God calls us, each one individually, and loves us unconditionally. He calls us first to love Him, healing and strengthening us to hear and answer His call in ever-widening circles—in our families, in our Church, in our neighborhoods, in our world . . .

"Lord, we have gathered to hear Your Son's voice in the Gospel. He has endowed us with the power of His Spirit and given us the opportunity to answer 'yes' or 'no.'

Help us to accept Jesus' invitation to follow Him, to take His Gospel as a guide and share with other believers. Fill us with the Holy Spirit which is the sign of His presence. Open our hearts to share the gifts You have first shared with us.

(Opportunity for shared prayer.)

"Father, help us to go forth in the peace that comes from Jesus, from the Word that tells us we are in His hands, we are loved, we are special, and we are blessed. Help us to go forth bearing the gift of eternal life like a flame that will never die, a flame that lights the way for our journey. Strengthen us to go forth filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit for You have invited us and share with us the life and peace of Jesus. For all the abundance of His goodness, we give You thanks and praise. Amen"

(Excerpted from Small Group Sharing Option A for Season 5 [Evangelization] of the RENEW process, Copyright ©1981, 1984, 1988 by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Newark, New Jersey, and used by permission of Paulist Press.)

Follow Through

Together, we have read and reflected on parts of the bishops' pastoral letter on stewardship, we have heard and meditated on portions of Scripture in order to better understand the life of discipleship and stewardship to which our faith calls us, and we have shared our insights, our experiences, and our prayers. But Jesus not only calls us to Himself, He also sends us out in service—"He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two . . ." (Mk 6:7). Ideally, our sharing should lead each of us to constructive, concrete actions to reinforce what we have learned and encourage our growth in faith.

The following are some examples to spur your thinking:

- If, in the sharing, you recalled a person who was influential in the development of your faith, write a note to thank him or her.
- Pray daily for discernment. To what is the Lord calling you? To whom is He sending you? What would He have you say to them?
- Is there someone within your sphere of influence who might be helped by a timely word or a gentle suggestion? Make an effort to speak to that person this week.
- Sign up to help the parish RCIA team in a way which best fits your talents and personality—to help welcome inquirers, to be a sponsor, to provide refreshments for the meetings . . .

Because those intentions we have defined most clearly are the ones we are most likely to act upon, write your "follow through" intention here, and share it with the group if you are comfortable doing so.

Date: _____