

CALLED AS A WOUNDED PEOPLE TO FOLLOW GOD IMMEDIATELY
THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (YEAR B) – 24 JANUARY 2021



The Calling of Peter & Andrew | Ghirlandaio 1449 – 1494 – fresco, Sistine Chapel | public domain

ONE IN THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

Yesterday Helen and Matthew became one in the sacrament of matrimony. As followers of Jesus, they shared their wedding vows, exchanged wedding rings, and prayed as a couple. They lit their wedding candle, remembering Jesus as their Light. The whole gathered community prayed over Matthew and Helen. They celebrated their love for each other and their love for God.

We pray for couples, who because of COVID restrictions, have delayed their wedding ceremony until this year.

[Pause and pray]

TWO SETS OF BROTHERS CALLED TO BE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

In today's Gospel are two sets of brothers who were called to be followers of Jesus.

GOSPEL OF MARK 1:14-20

In the Gospel we recall the scene by the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was proclaiming the Good News of God. John the Baptist had been arrested and now it was that special time in human history for Jesus to begin his public ministry.

The prophets had been prophesying about this time of the Messiah for many hundreds of years. Now the era had dawned.

Simon and Andrew were casting out their net for a catch of fish, when they were called by Jesus. James and John were mending their net, when they were called by Jesus.

Jesus gazed at them.

All four of them left their jobs *'immediately'*, *'at once'* to follow Jesus.

There was a sense of urgency.

LET US IMAGINE WE ARE THERE

Let us read the Gospel account of the four disciples,
and imagine ourselves there, witnessing both events.

*"As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee,
he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake
— 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 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. "*

Peter and Andrew followed Jesus immediately.
There were no excuses to delay their response.
Their response was wholehearted.
When Jesus called James and John,
they could see that Peter and Andrew were already following Jesus.

Did that make it easier for them to follow, knowing the physical witness of Peter and Andrew responding to Jesus already?

*Are we more like Peter and Andrew?
Or are we more like James and John?*

CALL TO COMMUNITY

The Gospel of Mark tells us.

*"They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came,
he entered the synagogue and taught."*

As followers, they are learning by the example of Jesus.
And through Jesus, they learn about the importance of community faith worship in their lives.

Brothers Simon and Andrew entered into the family of Jesus.
Brothers James and John entered into the family of Jesus.
All four entered into the divine dream of Jesus.

Later in the Gospel we learn about the wounded-ness of each of them.
We recognize this call to community today,

as we gather in community worship this Sunday to praise God.
We have entered into the divine dream of God.
Our community faith worship is shaped by Jesus later in his ministry,
with Jesus at the *Last Supper, the Crucifixion* and *the Resurrection*.
And shaped by the disciples of Jesus
in those very early decades of Christian witness.
We celebrate *Eucharist*.

THE BOOK OF JONAH

The Book of Jonah helps us to reflect on our wounded-ness.

JONAH 3:1-5.10

In the first Reading today, we hear of the call from God,
to Jonah to go forward as a prophet to Nineveh
and to call the people to repent.
The archaeological remains of ancient Nineveh
are near the modern city of Mosul in northern Iraq.
Several Eastern Catholic and Orthodox traditions commemorate
the three days of the Fast of Nineveh before Lent.
Earlier in the *Book of Jonah*, we see a wounded Jonah.
Jonah was wounded by his failure to serve God,
wounded by his stubbornness, wounded by his attempt to run away.
Yet God continued to call Jonah through his wounded-ness.

*God continues to call each of us, despite our stubbornness and apathy at times.
God continues to call us, as **wounded individuals** and as **a wounded church community**.*

Simon and Andrew, James and John grew in their faith relationship with Jesus.
As disciples they followed Jesus, listened, fell and got up again.
They learnt from their wounded-ness and from their joys.
Much later, the disciples gathered after the death of Jesus.
They gathered in a closed room, scared.
The *Risen Jesus* appeared to them with his wounds.

POPE FRANCIS SPEAKING ABOUT WOUNDS

In his Homily to Priests, Religious Brothers, Sisters Consecrated, Seminarians, three years ago in Chile, Pope Francis reflected on the wounds of Risen Jesus.

[MEETING WITH PRIESTS, CONSECRATED MEN AND WOMEN AND SEMINARIANS ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS Santiago Cathedral Tuesday, 16. January 2018]

He shared that,

*“Jesus Christ does not appear to his disciples without his wounds;
those very wounds enabled Thomas to profess his faith.
We are not asked to ignore or hide our wounds.
A Church with wounds can understand the wounds of today’s world and make them her
own, suffering with them,
accompanying them and seeking to heal them.*

*A wounded Church does not make herself the centre of things,
does not believe that she is perfect,
but puts at the centre the one who can heal those wounds,
whose name is Jesus Christ.
The knowledge that we are wounded sets us free.
Yes, it sets us free from becoming self-referential
and thinking ourselves superior.
It sets us free from the promethean tendency of
“those who ultimately trust only in their own powers
and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules
or remain intransigently faithful
to a particular Catholic style of the past”. [4]
In Jesus, our wounds are risen.
They inspire solidarity; they help us to tear down the walls
that enclose us in elitism and they impel us to build bridges
and to encounter all those yearning
for that merciful love which Christ alone can give. “*

SPRINKLING OF ASHES AS A SYMBOL OF REPENTANCE

One of the symbols of our wounded-ness and our need to repent is receiving the Ashes on Ash Wednesday; this year Ash Wednesday on February 17th.
One of the ancient ways to receive the ashes is on our foreheads, in the sign of the cross.

Another ancient way, and still used today in some parts of the church in the world, is to receive the Ashes, sprinkled on the crown of our heads.

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Pope Francis has decreed in this year of 2021, that all Catholic Churches around the world distribute the Ashes by the sprinkling on the head of people.

The minister says the words once, to all present, rather than to each person individually.

The minister sanitizes his or her hands, and then sprinkles the ashes on the crown of each person's head.

Each of us receive the ashes humbly.

I mention this now, to give people time to think about the change.
More details will be provided before the season of Lent begins.

As a wounded people, called by God to follow Jesus,
let us continue our praise of God in this Eucharist.

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

Readings <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/012421.cfm>