

**Scripture**

Mark 1:14-20

# Heeding the Call

**We follow Jesus to catch people for God.**

- ◆ In today's gospel, Jesus calls four fishermen to be his first followers.
- ◆ Young children can hear the Church affirm that Jesus calls each one of them, too, to be beloved followers.
- ◆ In today's session we help children explore the gospel story as well as God's call to us in baptism.

**Question of the Week**

"Holy" can describe what we give to God. What times in our lives are holy? How do we "make holy" our work, our play, our times with friends and family?

**Core Session**

- ◆ Getting Started (*pan or bowl of water, tea strainers or tropical fish nets, plain or colored foil*)
- ◆ Gospel Story: Jesus Is Walking
- ◆ Craft: Boats and Fishers (*pipe cleaners in assorted colors, foil, assorted lids, such as cardboard oatmeal-box lids, metal mayonnaise-jar lids, plastic peanut-butter jar lids, etc.*)
- ◆ Praying Together

**Enrichment**

- ◆ Discover the Good News
- ◆ Singing Together
- ◆ Action Rhyme: Jesus Comes Calling
- ◆ Story-Review Game: Come with Jesus
- ◆ Info: Young Children and the Gospel
- ◆ Info: Where You'll Find Everything Else

**Helps for Catechists**

- ◆ More about Today's Scriptures
- ◆ Reflection
- ◆ The Scriptures and the Catechism
- ◆ Our Catholic Heritage: What Is the New Covenant?
- ◆ The World of the Bible: The Kingdom of God

## ✓ Getting Started (5-10 minutes)

Children catch foil “fish.”

Gather the children around the bowl. Invite children to help you tear and strew small bits of foil on the surface of the water. Explain that these are tiny “fish.” *(Some of the foil bits will probably sink—these are the “fish” who are swimming on the bottom!)*

Invite children to use the tea strainer or tropical fish net to catch the foil “fish.” Encourage children to talk about the task as they play by making these or similar comments:

- ◆ That’s hard work—they keep swimming away.
- ◆ I wonder if catching real fish is this hard.

Close by inviting children to hear a story about men who are fishing.

## ✓ Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)

### Jesus is Walking

*Focus: For today’s story, you can use toy boats and fishers to provide a focal point. See the Boats and Fishers Craft below.*

Jesus is walking by the sea,  
By the sea of Galilee.

Jesus is walking, and what does he see?  
Fishermen fishing on the sea.

“Peter and Andrew, John and James,”  
Jesus calls them by their names.

“Leave your boats and come with me.”  
The fishermen scurry as fast as can be.

“Jesus, can we walk with you?  
Jesus, can we talk with you?”

“Yes, you are my friends, my chosen four.  
Now we’ll go and find even more.”

Jesus is walking by the sea,  
And now he’s calling you and me!

## ✓ Craft (5-15 minutes)

### Boats and Fishers

Children make toy boats and fishers. These simple toys can be used during the session, then taken home.

Cut the pipe cleaners into lengths of 2"-4". Help children follow these steps to make pipe cleaner figures:

- ◆ Take one length of pipe cleaner.
- ◆ Bend this length in half, forming a loop for the head.
- ◆ Make twists below the loop to form the body.
- ◆ Take a second length of pipe cleaner.
- ◆ Twist this second length around the body, just underneath the head, to form the arms.
- ◆ Add as many twists to the arms as are needed to secure the arms and make them the appropriate length.

Help the children follow these steps to make toy boats:

- ◆ For each boat, choose a lid.
- ◆ Cover the lid in foil, crimping as necessary to make the foil cling closely to the lid.

The pipe cleaner figures can bend or pose in many ways. Children can begin by seating the figures in the foil-covered boats, which can float upon the water.

Keep the water, boats and figures available as a free-play center for today’s session. Invite two or three children at a time to play at this center.

## ✓ Praying Together (5 minutes)

Gather children in a circle. Move from child to child. Touch each child in turn on the head or shoulder as you ask:

- ◆ *(Child’s name)*, will you follow Jesus?

Accept the children’s free response to this question.

Close by praying:

- ◆ Thank you, God, for all the friends of Jesus in this room. *(Name each child.)* Help us to follow Jesus every day. *Amen.*

**Note:** Distribute this week’s *At Home with the Good News* to children before they leave, or e-mail it to their parents after the session.

## □ Discover the Good News

(5-10 minutes)

In today's *Discover the Good News* you'll find an illustrated version of the action rhyme below. You'll also find an easy fishing game for children to make and play.

## □ Singing Together (10-15 minutes)

From *Singing the Good News*, sing together:

- ◆ "Listen for the Voice of the Lord" (songbook p. 24, also available as an MP3)
- ◆ "Teacher and Healer" (songbook p. 27, also available as an MP3)

Together with the Baptism Exploration activity that is attached to this document, you may also sing:

- ◆ "Water, Cool and Clear" (p. 26 of the songbook)

**Note:** To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Winter-B *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Singing the Good News*.

The rhythm of "Water, Cool and Clear" makes it a good choice for children's movement activities. Give each child a colored cloth or scarf—shades of blue would be especially appropriate.

Children wave the scarves as they dance and sway in rhythm with these words of the song "Water, Cool and Clear":

*Water, cool and clear,  
Water, flowing free.  
Water, cool and clear,  
Bring new life to me.*

## □ Action Rhyme (5-10 minutes)

### Jesus Comes Calling

Children learn "Jesus Comes Calling," a rhymed version of today's story.

Stand in a circle with the children. Teach children the words and motions to the action rhyme below. Directions are written for the right hand, but can be reversed easily for left-handed participants.

Four men fishing,  
*(Hold up four fingers.)*  
On the deep blue sea.  
*(Move hand like a wave from right to left.)*

Jesus comes calling,  
*(Frame mouth with hands.)*  
And then there are three.  
*(Hold up three fingers.)*

Three men fishing,  
*(Hold up three fingers.)*  
On the water blue.  
*(Move hand like a wave from right to left.)*

Jesus comes calling,  
*(Frame mouth with hands.)*  
And then there are two.  
*(Hold up two fingers.)*

Two men fishing,  
*(Hold up two fingers.)*  
On the water, in the sun.  
*(Move hand like a wave from right to left.)*

Jesus comes calling,  
*(Frame mouth with hands.)*  
And then there is one.  
*(Hold up one finger.)*

One man fishing,  
*(Hold up one finger.)*  
On the water, in the sun.  
*(Move hand like a wave from right to left.)*

Jesus comes calling,  
*(Frame mouth with hands.)*  
And then there are none.  
*(Shrug, hands to side, palms up.)*

No men fishing,  
*(Shrug, hands to side, palms up.)*  
On the deep blue sea.  
*(Move hand like a wave from right to left.)*

Jesus comes calling,  
*(Frame mouth with hands.)*  
He's calling ME!  
*(Make fist. Point thumb to self.)*

## □ Story-Review Game (10-20 minutes)

### Come with Jesus

Children play games based on today's story.

Children review today's story with this variation of Follow the Leader.

Make a circle of chairs large enough so that all the children can fit inside. Leave enough room outside the circle for a line of children to walk around.

Explain that the circle of chairs is a boat. Ask a volunteer to be Jesus. Ask the other children to go inside the boat and pretend to fish.

Jesus walks around outside the circle and calls one child inside the circle by saying:

◆ *(Child's name)*, come with me.

This child gets up and follows Jesus. The game continues until all the children are in the line, following Jesus. Repeat the game with other volunteers as Jesus. *(The last child picked is a good choice for the next Jesus.)*

Kindergartners may like a more challenging version of this game. Jesus can make motions, such as turning in place, clapping hands or hopping. All the children in line try to follow these movements.

*Activity Soundtrack:* Play music that celebrates our call to discipleship such as "Oh Happy Day." (Open your Winter-B *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Companion Music* for options on obtaining this music.)

## INFO Young Children and the Gospel

In last week's Old Testament reading, God called an ordinary child to be his prophet. In today's gospel, Jesus calls four ordinary fishermen to be his first disciples. What we may call ordinary, God can make extraordinary.

Catechists have the blessed opportunity to look and listen for the "ordinary extraordinary" already present in the children with whom we work. Children are not waiting to grow up before they begin living fully. They already live in relationship with God, themselves and other people. They already know what it is to receive love—or its absence. They already need just what we need: the word of God and the life of God's people.

In our efforts to prepare children effectively for their futures, we must not forget that children need word, sacraments and supportive relationships for their lives today. Celebrate the extraordinary possibilities that God has gathered together in these children.

## INFO Where You'll Find Everything Else

- ◆ Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  - Backgrounds and reflections for today's readings, titled *More about Today's Scriptures*.
  - A copy of today's *Gospel Story: Jesus Is Walking*, which can be distributed or e-mailed to children and their families.
  - Instructions for one of this season's *Baptism Exploration* activities.
  - An optional *Story-Review Game: I'm Calling*.
- ◆ Open your Winter-B *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Seasonal Articles* to find:
  - Information on Winter-B's *Models of the Faith*.
  - An article for catechists and/or families exploring *Prophets and Prophecy*.
  - An article for catechists and/or families exploring *Our Catholic Heritage*.

## More about Today's Scriptures

Today's readings explore the sometimes risky nature of Christian discipleship. The prophet Jonah obeys God's call to preach to the people of Nineveh, who repent and believe. Paul urges the Corinthians to give priority to God's mission instead of the passing concerns of this world. When Jesus calls his first disciples, they abandon their jobs and homes—in short, their security—to follow him.

### Jonah 3:1-5, 10

Especially after the exile, many Jews clung to a rigid nationalistic mindset that elevated their identity as God's chosen people. As such, they felt they had an exclusive claim on God's mercy. Jonah embodied this attitude, evident in his reluctance to go to Nineveh

“Christianity is a person, one who loved us so much, one who calls for our love. Christianity is Christ.”

—Bishop Oscar Romero

and his great disappointment with God's decision to have mercy on the city.

Today's reading tells of Jonah's obedience to God's second call.

As the capital city of

Assyria, Nineveh not only posed a political danger, but its “wickedness” (1:2) jeopardized Israel's spiritual welfare. The evil of the city and its inhabitants makes even more surprising the belief and repentance with which they respond to the message of this Israelite.

Later, Jesus uses the repentance and deliverance of Nineveh as a warning sign to his unbelieving listeners (Matthew 12:38-41; Luke 11:29-32). Those who experience genuine conversion, as did the Ninevites, receive the fullness of God's generous mercy.

### 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Today's reading falls within Paul's long response to the community's questions about marriage. Marriage, which for the ancients was primarily for the continuation of the family, has no more role in light of the “impending crisis” (v. 26), “distress in this life” (v. 28) and the “passing away” of “the present form of this world” (v. 31). The old world and its forms were no longer relevant because the new age had dawned with Jesus and would flower soon when Jesus returned.

Although many scholars hold that Paul is speaking solely within the context of his expectation of Christ's imminent return, which did not occur as Paul thought it would, others apply Paul's teaching to a broader

understanding of the nature of this transitory age and the urgency he places on spiritual priorities. These verses offer a basis for a healthy perspective for how to establish a value system for contemporary Christian life. Christians cannot approach their ordinary tasks with non-Christian motives.

### Mark 1:14-20

Today's reading recounts the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He proclaims “the good news of God” that the “kingdom of God has come near” (v. 14). God's promised rule over all that has been created and all God's past acts for salvation are now coming to fruition. Though God's rule is present in Jesus, its full realization remains in the future.

The response to the presence of God's kingdom is conversion or repentance. In the Greek and Hebrew sense of the word, this is not a feeling of sorrow but the action of turning around, a total reorientation of oneself to God, not intellectual assent to a set of propositions nor an emotional reaction but a total response of oneself to the message.

While elsewhere in scripture the image of fishing for people is used as an image of judgment, Jesus uses it to explain the work of evangelization. Like these disciples, we must take the skills learned through our ordinary lives and redirect them to the work of the kingdom.

## Reflection

“Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God” (Mark 1:14). That sentence should offset the opinion that Christianity is a dour business of keeping rules and plodding grimly through drudgery. During an ordinary day, how do we respond when a friend phones with good news, or an e-mail carries that title? Unless we're emotional clods, we rejoice with the friend. One positive e-mail brightens a whole string of spam. Shouldn't some of that spirit extend to the best news we could ever hear?

It's intriguing to speculate on other ways Jesus could have come: haranguing, handing down laws, punishing. Instead, he preaches, entrusting his message to the foggy memories of his hearers. We all know how selective memory can be; Jesus is vulnerable enough to hand over his treasure to the uncertain hands (and ears) of his followers. In the Jewish tradition, the person was present as his words were proclaimed. Do

we still cherish the scripture we hear in church as if Jesus himself were speaking it?

Then Jesus adds another essential ingredient, the personal invitation. He sees in two fishermen what no one else sees, the potential to be dear friends, and eventually, fishers for people.

## The Scriptures and the Catechism

Today we reflect on the wonderful gift that God gives us in our call to follow Jesus (*CCC*, #153–165). Just as fishermen become fishers of men, so our discipleship will not take us out of our ordinary lives but will demand that our ordinary tasks become transformed because of Jesus' presence. Discipleship will be a participation in the mission of Jesus to gather all humanity into a community that is shaped by God's guidelines (*CCC*, #831, 849–56).

## Our Catholic Heritage

### What Is the New Covenant?

The focus for understanding the covenant is relationship. God is always in pursuit of a relationship with us. The Old Covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Abraham is also the basis for a relationship—between God and the Jewish people. The New Covenant differs both in scope and in quality. It does not nullify the Old Covenant; rather, it ratifies it, fulfills it and then cancels it as a loan that is paid in full.

The relationship that God has made possible through the work of Jesus Christ is now available to all people everywhere. What was a glimmer of grace in the Old Covenant is now a burst of glory. The hope of intimacy has become a reality. The Old Covenant needed the structure of a treaty or agreement between two parties: the one promising protection and divine care, the other promising faithfulness and obedience. Certain stipulations were given that would make clear the fulfillment of these promises. These laws covered every detail of the life of both community and individual. The Promised Land was the sign of God's commitment; the Ten Commandments summarized the obligations of God's people.

The New Covenant needs no list of obligations or duties that regulate every aspect of our lives. Since the relationship is now within, written on the heart (Jeremiah 31:33), each person under the New Covenant knows God personally, intimately. The promises we make at our baptism make clear the course of our new relationship with God. After that, as Paul urges, we explore the will of God and increasingly conform our lives to it (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:17; Colossians 1:9).

When we come together as a community and celebrate the Eucharist, we reaffirm this relationship. There our corporate memory recalls the work of Jesus that has made possible our confident and joyful approach to God. Together we redirect our attention on the relationship we share with one another as fellow members of the New Covenant and with God as the Life of the New Covenant.

## The World of the Bible

### The Kingdom of God

The first words of the hero of a story can be significant for they serve as a clue to his life and thought. So in Mark's gospel when Jesus journeys from the wilderness back to the Galilean hills to begin his ministry, he announces that God's promised kingdom rule is here—right now. And if people want to follow this new way, then they must change their lives and believe in this good news.

He begins to alert people to God's presence in their lives and the need to begin to live differently. Jesus called this new way of relating to God and others *the kingdom of God*.

In his teaching and preaching, Jesus identifies God's ideal community as the kingdom of God. This community is to be characterized by a new way of living together that includes everyone (both Jew and Gentile) who, as brothers and sisters, will relate to God as their Father and as a King whose benevolent rule over them guides every moment of their lives. The kingdom is inaugurated by Jesus and continues today in the Christian community that daily strives to make God's way of being a community into a reality.