

## Reflection for the Third Sunday before Advent. Mark 1: 14-20

It is interesting, as we compare the Gospels, the priority that the writers place upon differing events. They are not necessarily out of sequence but simply because of the importance of them to the narrative. In the first chapter of Mark's Gospel, which contains no Nativity story, Jesus is already at work proclaiming the Good News, saying that the time has come, and the Kingdom of God has come near. Jesus is now ready to call his disciples to go with Him on His mission. It is difficult to imagine that those fishermen had not already been exposed to Jesus' teaching, nevertheless, the call to "Follow me" must have been strong for them to walk away from their daily lives, leave everything behind and follow Jesus. We might picture poor old Zebedee watching in disbelief as his boys walk away leaving him with his boat or boats. On the other hand, could it be that Zebedee might have encouraged them, perhaps he too had heard those words and said, 'Go on boys, off you go, this could be important.'

The prophet Elijah calls Elisha to be his successor, Elisha is ploughing with oxen. When he accepts Elijah's challenge, he burns his plough and slaughters his oxen, Elisha is committing himself whole heartedly, he cannot go back to be a farmer because the plough and oxen have gone, his life is committed. Simon, Andrew, James and John, all leave their way of life to follow Jesus. They would not have had any social security or savings to see them on their way. Fishing was, and is, a hand to mouth existence, so no cushion for them. Their commitment to the call was complete and absolute, no going back, now they belong to Jesus.

For Mark it is important to emphasise that Jesus is not simply a lone voice but that loyal followers surround him. The message that Jesus brings is for everyone. It is a message that needs to be shared, and we need to be constantly reminded of it. The reason that the teaching of Jesus, the story of God's love and forgiveness, spread so quickly in the post resurrection times was because so many were moved by the call that they enthusiastically shared it, something that we find harder to do in our time.

The call "Follow me" continues across the ages and very much remains for us today. How far are we prepared to answer this call? It is probably not appropriate to abandon everything but how much do we allow our everyday lives and the mores of society to clash with the call "Follow me." The answer will be different for us all but when we start to say, 'I can't because...' we might ask, 'but could I?' and ponder those who have left everything to share the Gospel.

*Loving Lord,  
Help us to follow the tough love of your Son  
In all our dealings with the world  
May we put our relationship with your Son  
before all else, knowing that,  
in doing so, we may grow closer to each other,  
joining together in faith,  
listening together in love,  
armed with your Holy Spirit,  
in union with you and your Son,  
resisting evil and restoring trust.  
Amen*