

“Take courage, Jesus is calling you”, this is an invitation for the faithful to respond. Just as the Israelites were led back to the river Jordan to settle in the land of Ephraim, Christ calls us to himself, to the promise of eternal life. How do we respond to that call? Who will lead us on our journey? What is required to receive the blessings of the Lord?

“God doesn’t require us to succeed; he only requires that you try.” – **Mother Teresa**

In 1946, while travelling in a train to Darjeeling to make a retreat, Sister Teresa heard what she later explained as “a call within a call. The message was clear. I was to leave the convent and help the poor while living among them.” She also heard a call to “follow Christ into the slums to serve him among the poorest of the poor.”

After receiving permission to leave Loreto, she established a new religious community and undertook her new work, she took a nursing course for several months. She returned to Calcutta, where she lived in the slums and opened a school for poor children. Dressed in a white sari and sandals, the ordinary dress of an Indian woman, she soon began getting to know her neighbors—especially the poor, the sick, and their needs.

The first step in answering the call of Christ, is actually to listen. Listen prayerfully to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Most of us are not going to have the profound experience that St. Paul had in being struck down in a blinding light. Nevertheless, we are all are called to the service of the Lord. We are gathered here today, there are other places we could be, we chose to be here, celebrating together. That is a step, participating in Christ’s Paschal mystery with others. For some this alone can be a struggle at first. Then we want more, to receive the Eucharist and receive the fullness of grace available to us as followers of Jesus. This is how we answer the call to full communion in the church. Whether through religious education classes as a child, or participation in RCIA as an adult, the desire to respond to the yearning for fulfillment requires us to say yes and have the courage to trust in the Lord.

Before a person is able to hear and accept the good news that Christ has died for them and longs to save them from their sins, it is often necessary to address their physical and spiritual needs, to bind up their wounds. We are called to accompany them in their encounter with Jesus through our charity.

Then, they will be more open to receiving the love that Jesus wishes to pour into their hearts. Healing these wounds is often the work of those who answer an extraordinary call. The call to ordained and consecrated life.

The Lord did not leave us alone to travel this journey. We are all called to Christ, some are called in a special way. From amongst the faithful God calls some to the ordained ministry and religious life. Those who are called to a vocation in the church seek to serve in a different capacity. Many of us have heard the phrase, “God does not call the equipped, he equips the called”, well I for one believe this whole heartedly and am very thankful.

I find these accounts of a call to serve to be very interesting for a number of reasons. Listening to the men and women called to serve the church reflect on how they have experienced the love of Christ while following their heart in ministry is always an uplifting experience. In following the path laid out for us by the Holy Spirit we can look back and see how certain encounters and interactions nudge us in the right direction. But there is always a choice, we have to choose to follow these nudges, and they can come from the least expected places.

As for me, I like to say a call is as much something you do not run away from, as it is a magnetic attraction you are drawn towards. Those feelings of comfort in the thought of participating in a ministry, or the excitement in realizing you have a feeling of belonging within a community.

What Christ established with the twelve blossomed into the Church we have today. Men chosen from among the people to serve God in his mission, bringing the lost and broken back to himself. In the bishops and priests, we have not only a living example of a life dedicated to Christ, but we are able to participate in the Eucharist by the graces afforded to these men to consecrate the body and blood, making the Lord present to us today. Providing us with a way to connect with Christ just as the apostles did at the last supper.

Christ steps into the light and lets himself be seen. No more are we hearing of Jesus trying to remain in the background as we have heard for the previous weeks. We see a sizable crowd has gathered to greet him and there is a man calling out. Bartimaeus is blind, but he is not calling for Christ to heal him, he implores Jesus to “have pity on him”. Calling out first recognizing he is Jesus of Nazareth, then acknowledging him as the son of David. Bartimaeus was not just asking a traveler to perform a mystical healing ritual, he was asking the Messiah, to have pity on him. It seems even the crowd recognized the extraordinary status of his request in

saying “Take courage, Jesus is calling you”. The man tells Jesus he wants to see, and see he does. Christ does not just heal him, he responds “Go your way, your faith has saved you”. When Christ does this, not only is Bartimaeus’s sight restored, but where does he go? He follows Jesus. He answers his call.

Christ calls us to be more than idle bystanders. We have to be active participants in the life that we are blessed with. We have to ask Christ, we have to approach him in a relational fashion, asking for what we need and understanding how we are to receive these gifts. True faith empowers us to overcome the obstacles we are confronted with. We have to allow ourselves the opportunity to hear the call of the Lord, and have the courage to answer that call when it is recognized, we may struggle, and even stumble, but we have to keep trying. And sometimes we have to cry out as Bartimaeus did “have pity on me”. Just as Christ did not answer at the first plea from Bartimaeus, in not answering immediately to our petitions we can realize the importance of a sincerely faithful approach to our lives. This could be a way for us to understand that we need Christ to truly be fulfilled in all that we do.