

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 25, 2026

St. Edward's Parish

Friends, today we hear the call of the first Apostles. It is a brief account; however, it is filled with profound insight about the spiritual life that can apply to every generation even to us right now.

Note that, up to this point, at least Andrew, Peter, and John have already met Jesus. John the Baptist pointed Jesus out to them, and they spent time with Him. They likely also witnessed the miracle at the wedding of Cana. Now they are back at their fishing boats, perhaps excitedly discussing what has taken place, and Jesus comes inviting them to make a definitive choice to follow Him. This opens to us one of the unique aspects of the Christianity among all religions. At its heart, Christianity is a relationship with a person. It is not merely a collection of intellectual truths or a moral code (although it includes those), rather it is first about following a person. Pope Benedict's encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) began with this idea. He said, "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction (DCE 1)."

This commitment to Jesus is something easy for us to grasp because we are made for personal relationship. It may be like choosing to marry someone in that a certainty grips us that this is the person we have been longing for. When I was in university, I met a girl I really liked, and I was wondering about marriage. One day I asked my mother and one of my sisters, "How can you know when you have found the person you should marry?" They both said simply, "You will just know!" I was hoping for more explanation; however, there is something here that made sense. We can imagine finding someone that we simply know is right for us. A young man does not need to say, "Wait, there are still millions of single women in the world, and I must meet all of them before I decide." No, it is possible to have the conviction, when he meets the right woman, that his searching has stopped. He does not need to examine everything or know all the answers. Because we are flawed human beings, it often does not work out so neatly in our human relationships. However, there is a reality here that is easy to grasp. The first disciples did not yet know everything

about Jesus, they had not examined every religious book or leader, but Jesus gripped them with a certainty that He was the one they had been waiting for. They were also assisted by the grace of God working within them to help make that act of total trust. We are invited to a similar encounter, namely, to recognize Jesus as the answer to the longing of our hearts and the mystery of our lives and make a definitive choice for Him with the help of grace.

There is a principle to keep in mind: to love something, we must first know something about it. For example, we cannot love a song if we have never heard it. It is not necessary to know everything about something to love it, but we must have some trustworthy knowledge. Therefore, we need accurate knowledge of Jesus, the truths He taught, and the Church He founded to make this act of love and trust in Him. One problem we face, even among Catholics, is religious ignorance. For the past several decades, we have suffered from a lack of clear teaching and a watered-down approach to our faith. Therefore, to help our encounter with Jesus it is necessary to take steps to learn about Him and the Catholic faith. For example, by regular reading of the Scriptures (a good commentary is helpful) or a study bible such as the Ignatius Catholic Study Bible), reading from the Catechism, taking out a book from our lending library, reading the writings of the saints, using Formed.org, or enrolling in a parish faith formation program like 33 Days to Morning Glory. It is not necessary to learn everything, but we need to do our part to have an accurate foundation. God can then grant us the grace to make the concrete step of choosing to put Jesus at the center of our lives.

The Apostles in the Gospel today left everything to follow Jesus. Most of us will not be asked to do the exact same thing. We may, instead, be expected to remain in the same family, the same job, the same parish community we are right now. However, the interior act of being captivated by Jesus and choosing Him as the center of our lives is an invitation open to everyone. With God's grace, and a little effort on our own part, let us strive to be like the Apostles in this.