January GIFT

The Call of the Apostles

The Call of all Disciples

**Hospitality**

Instructions on power point to get food, pray the table prayer together, and do the table discussion. (Table prayer will be on plastic table stands.

Table Discussion during the meal:

Who do you know that are followers (disciples) of Jesus today? What makes them disciples? What kinds of things do disciples of Jesus do? Are you a disciple of Jesus? How do others know that?

**Welcome**

Welcome to January GIFT!

This year, we have been thinking a lot about being called. As we enter into Ordinary Time in the church calendar, we think about how we are called in the ordinary times of life. Ordinary Time happens after the Christmas season and before Lent, and again after the Easter Season. It is actually the longest season of the liturgical year, so it is a good time to think about how God is calling us in our every day lives.

The apostles were the first twelve people called by Jesus to follow him. And they were called in the ordinary, every day routine of their lives. Can anyone name one of the apostles? (Accept answers)

*(Simon Peter, James the son Zebedee, John the brother James, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot.)*

These same 12 apostles are also frequently called “disciples.” Disciple comes from an expression that is similar to “student.” The apostles were students of Jesus and they taught all of us how to be disciples of Jesus too. So, today we will think about the call of the disciples, and our call, and how we are all ‘students’ of Jesus.

Let’s stand for our opening song and remain standing for prayer.

Opening Prayer

**Prayer Leader:**

Let us begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us pray,

Loving God, you sent your Son Jesus to teach us how to live and how to love. As his disciples, we are challenged to walk in his footsteps and share his teachings with the world. Give us the courage, the faith, and the joy to be faithful disciples. And open our hearts to hear what you want us to hear today. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

We will now listen to the Word of God.

**Reader:**

A reading from the Gospel of John

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

**Prayer Leader:**

Loving God, we thank you for this time together and pray that our hearts will be open during this time. Amen.

Please be seated.

**Facilitator**

We are going to start today’s session thinking about the first followers of Jesus.

Let’s start with a video.

After the video, there will be discussion questions on the powerpoint to do with your family.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWiqXIn9tyg> - Jesus calls his first disciples

Discussion Question:

1. How do you think the apostles felt when Jesus called them?
2. What did Jesus ask them to do?
3. How did they respond?
4. Who do you think Jesus calls today?
5. Do you think Jesus might be calling you to something? How can you listen for how Jesus is calling you?

**Facilitator:**

So, why did those first apostles follow Jesus? What made them drop their nets and go?

Just like today, education was huge in Jesus' day. All Jewish boys wanted to be Rabbis, because teachers were the most respected people at that time. Young Jewish men studied hard to become a follower of a rabbi. They had to memorize the entire Old Testament.

At the age of fourteen, the ones who had memorized and studied so hard, would approach a Rabbi and request to become his disciple. The Rabbi would then quiz the boy. It was difficult and challenging. They really had to know their stuff. If the Rabbi quizzed you and determined that you were good enough, you would follow that rabbi. You would leave everything, (home, mother, father, synagogue, community…) and devote your entire life to being just like the Rabbi.

If you weren’t chosen, you usually went home and learned the family business. Simon and Andrew were fishermen, so they had not been chosen by a rabbi. But, Jesus, the teacher, the rabbi, chose them. He thinks they are good enough, even though others did not. He's giving them a chance to fulfill their dream. So of course they drop what they're doing and follow after the Rabbi.

Those first disciples are models for us today. We don’t have to be perfect people to be followers of Jesus. We just have to have open hearts.

Jesus called for his followers to help in his mission. Jesus surrounded himself with a group of imperfect but passionate people to help him preach his message of love and hope and forgiveness. He added more disciples as time went on.

Jesus calls us to become His disciples, too. The first followers of Jesus dropped everything they had to go with Him. Jesus called ordinary people to follow in his footsteps. By following Jesus’ example, his disciples developed certain attitudes that helped them do the work of sharing the Good News. In our first activity at your tables, we are going to think about how disciples share the Good News.

We need one person from each table to come forward to get a folder. This activity starts with a video, so as soon as we are ready, we will get it started.

**Watch the video on the Good Samaritan**

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLzdQtetedc**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLzdQtetedc)

**Table Activity 1**

**The Good Samaritan**

**After the video, discuss together:**

1. What did the Samaritan man do? Why?
2. Do you think it was easy for him to help the man who was beaten and left to die? Why or why not? Remember – the Samaritan and the man who was robbed were enemies.
3. Why do you think others did not help? Have you have not helped someone when you had a chance to?
4. Why do you think we call him a “good” Samaritan?
5. What are some words you might use to describe the Samaritan?
6. How do you think God called the Good Samaritan?
7. Do you think God might call us to be Good Samaritans?

**Activity:**

Work together with your table to write a modern version of the Good Samaritan. Try to imagine how this story could happen today, in 2019 in New Jersey. Who would the characters be and what would they do? (You don’t have to write it down. You can just tell the story together. If you do want to write it down, you can use a whiteboard.) Or, you can act it out. Be creative!

Younger children can draw a picture about their story.

After your story is written, discuss:

1. In your story, who was in the ditch? (Was it a person, group or country)
2. In your story, who passes by and why?
3. In your story, who stops to help? Who is the Good Samaritan?
4. What is Jesus’ message to us in this parable?
5. What is Jesus asking us to do in this parable?
6. Do you think this parable is just for individuals, or is it also a message for families, groups and institutions (church, government, business) as well?

If you have time, share your story with another table. Ask them to share their

story with you.

**Facilitator:**

Invite sharing.

Ask, do you think there are Good Samaritans today? Who are some modern Good Samaritans?

People who are like the Good Samaritan are living as disciples of Jesus. They hear God calling them to reach out to others and they respond.

Our next table activity will help us think about living our call as followers.

In the folders you will get in a few minutes, there are packets – each family should take one packet and work on it together. You are to do the entire packet. Take your time with it.

Will one person from each table return the folders you have and take a folder for our next activity.

**We Are Called to Transform the World**

Have you ever paid attention to a single snowflake or a single rain drop? They don't seem like very much, but when they all gather together they pack a lot of strength! Think of a branch covered in snow, that seems to be doing OK until one or two more snowflakes fall upon it and the weight is too heavy so the branch breaks. Or think of the raindrops that hit a puddle and push it into overflowing or becoming too deep for a car to cross. A tiny rain drop or snow flake do not seem to do much, but wow, what power they actually contain!



Not all of us are called to single great things like saving our whole community or erasing poverty in our town. But we are  
all called to many small things that work together to accomplish something great.

How does your family transform or serve the world? Check off all the things you currently do.

**You (and your family)...**

* recycle paper and plastic
* pay attention to your neighbors and help them out when needed
* give food to the food bank
* visit the elderly at a nursing home or do chores for seniors in your neighborhood
* walk or bike or use public transit when you can
* give money to projects that work to change the world
* sponsor a child in another country so he or she has food, clothing, an education
* collect clothes for those in need
* volunteer with organizations that *serve* others like the soup kitchen
* pray for people who are in need
* work with others to care for the environment like cleaning-up the neighborhood and planting trees

**Circle all the words or phrases below that you think best explain what transforming or serving the world means:**

**making a difference helping others feeling good**

**giving from what you need changing things so people aren't poor**

**protecting the earth charity people of all ages impossible**

**too hard together it's possible only if it doesn't hurt**

**Jesus Transforms the World**

Jesus made it clear that what ever we do to others we do to him. Read the story now in Matthew 25:31-46.

Jesus also made it clear, through the story of the Rich Man, that transforming the world is an unending challenge that we all need to participate in. Let's visit the story:

"A Jewish leader asked Jesus, "Good Teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?"

"Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked him. "No one is good except God alone.  
You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery; do not commit murder; do  
not steal; do not accuse anyone falsely; respect your father and your mother.'"

The man replied, "Ever since I was young, I have obeyed all these commandments."

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "There is still one more thing you need to do. Sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me." But when the man heard this, he became very sad, because he was very rich. (Luke 18: 18-23)

Use your imagination and consider what the rich man decided to do after his conversation with Jesus. Do you think he just walked away? Do you think he waited a few days then shared more of his money with others? What do you think?



**We Transform the World**

How can you and your family work to make the world a better place?

**1. Serve the poor and vulnerable.**

To be poor means that you do not have the money to pay for basic things like housing, food, clothing. To be vulnerable means that you are unable to care for yourself and need help from others. Nobody wants to be poor or unable to care for themselves. Serving the poor and the vulnerable means that we help them get their basic needs met and we treat each person like a son or daughter of God.

***2.* Work for justice to ensure the rights of all.**

Being poor is something the world can change. We can all work together to make sure everyone has what they need. Everyone deserves to have work, shelter, food, *access* to schools, health *care,* and so on. Sometimes we have to fight for the rights of those unable to fight for themselves.

***3.* Work for peace**

War is a scary and ugly thing. So is fighting at school or in our homes. As followers of Jesus, we know that peace is part of the love we are called to bring to the world. Jesus teaches us to be peacemakers.

**4. Care for creation**

The earth is a beautiful place, one of Sod's greatest gifts to us. But like every gift, we need to tend it with love and respect before it gets destroyed.

Complete this word *search* below, and think about what you and your family can do.

**Try It — A 30-Day Disciple Challenge**

*Are* you up for a thirty day disciple challenge? Here it is:

**In the next 30 days, do something each day, alone or with your family, to  
transform or serve the world. Once you make it through 30 days, see if you can do 60 days, or 90 days, or every day of the year!!!**

Here's some ideas to get you started:

1. Develop a birthday-donation habit. Invite guests to give a gift of $5 with half of the money going to the birthday boy or girl and the other half going to his or her favorite charity.
2. Make sandwiches for a homeless shelter or collect bread and fillings for them to use. Call a local shelter and ask what they need.
3. Clean up your neighborhood. Pick up trash in the park.
4. Write a letter to our mayor, senator, or the President on behalf of a local or national

need. YOU CAN DO THIS AT THE MLK DAY EVENT ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 20. BE SURE TO SIGN UP AND ATTEND!

1. Make a donation to a charity of your choice.
2. Help out at a local event raising money for *cancer* research or other important

needs.

1. *Create* a charity jar in which you can place part of your allowance each week until the jar is full. Then choose a charity for donation.
2. Collect donations of blankets from friends and family for a local shelter or clothing

center.

1. Do some research on current challenges facing the world and organizations that are working to address those challenges, such as the United Nations.
2. Pray for a place in need:

*Loving God, I pray this day for the country or continent of* . *May the children*

*there* . *Help me to* . *Amen.*

**Facilitator:**

Each one of us is called to be a disciple of Jesus. As Catholic disciples, we are called to demonstrate our love of Jesus by living like him, thereby showing love, compassion, hope, reconciliation, transformation, prayer, respect for life and a desire to bring about justice for all. Disciples of Jesus are called to love one another. We show that love in big and small ways every day to people who need to know that God’s love is for them and that God is with them. No one is too old or too young to be a disciple. No one has to be perfect. All we have to do is have an open heart – like the Good Samaritan.

**Announcements: Heifer Int’l - Donna, MLK - Trish**

**Closing Prayer**

**Please stand**

Lord Jesus,

Open my eyes that they may see the needs of the poor; move my hands that they may feed the hungry; touch my heart that it may bring warmth to the despairing; teach me the generosity that welcomes strangers; let me share my possessions to clothe the naked;

give me the care that strengthens the sick; make me share in the quest to set the prisoner free.

In serving the needs of the poor may we grow closer to you. Amen.

**Listen to this quote from Mother Teresa:**

“At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done.

We will be judged by ‘I was hungry and you gave me food to eat, I was naked and you clothed me

I was homeless and you took me in.’

Hungry not only for bread—but for love. Naked not only for clothing—but naked of human dignity and respect. Homeless not only for want of a room of bricks—but homeless because of rejection.

This is Christ in distressing disguise.”

**Respond**

Jesus challenges us to serve those in need. In fact we will be judged by how well we have served others. Let us now pray that God will give us the eyes to see those in need and to act. Our response will be “Lord, give us the grace to act for justice.”

Leader: I was hungry and you gave me food....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Leader: I was thirsty and you gave me drink....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Leader: I was a stranger and you welcomed me....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Leader: I was naked and you clothed me....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

Leader: I was ill and you comforted me....

All: Lord give us the grace to act for justice

**Closing Prayer**

God, true light and source of all light, may we recognize you in oppressed people and poor people, in homeless people and hungry people. May we be open to your Spirit that we may be a means of healing, strength and peace for all your people. We ask this through Jesus, your son and our brother.

We close our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

As we close today, please join in singing our closing song which is our closing pr