

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Willing to Risk Change First Week in Ordinary Time Monday, January 13, 2014
8:15 AM 1 Sm 1:1-8; **Mk 1:14-20** (Vocation to discipleship)

This story about Jesus calling the first apostles is indicative of the kind of movement that he is inaugurating and the kind of reality he wills the Church to be.

There is an announcement that something is different: **“This is the time of fulfillment.”** That time of fulfillment comes with him; he is the time of fulfillment. **Jesus himself is the fulfillment** of the providence, of the love, of the care that God has for his own creation: God himself embodied and ensouled in humanity with human body and human soul, ready now to work within the human nature, the human experience—the time of fulfillment.

In order to take advantage of this time of fulfillment, however, something is necessary as well. **There has to be a repentance**, which means a new way of thinking, **metanoia, new thought**. One of the great disadvantages of growing up Christian is that we think we know what the gospel is all about, but nobody can know it. **The gospel is something always new and fresh. It cannot be trained into people.** It’s true there are some forms of training better than others, but no matter what, the finest training, the finest catechesis is only a preparation for the real gospel, the real thing, the real good news. No matter how fine, how wonderful our background is, our upbringing, our education **we need to change the way we think because it is practically certain that we will have conformed to the world.** No matter how many saintly people touched us, we conform to the world because that is a part of our human nature. **We learn by imitating.** We learn by seeing. We learn by hearing, and what we hear and what we see isn’t really God’s way, except in those few cases that we might not even notice.

For whatever reason, evil seems to be able to propagate itself much more easily than goodness. Why? I don't know; it seems to be. So this is the way the world is and this is the world that God loves and the world in which **God has come to act from within. We can be part of the action if we start with new thoughts**, if we recognize that there are some very tired, old ways of thinking that don't fit anymore.

And so when Jesus goes to call apostles, followers, disciples, what does he do? He picks fishermen. Who are **fishermen**? Nobodies—they are not important people at all, and they are not educated either. But these fishermen, at least these that are mentioned here—maybe he called others who didn't respond—but **these were unusual people because they were willing to leave behind what they knew**. That's a form of repentance, to leave behind what you know and to move on to something else. That's risky! That's exactly what he is asking for. **He wants people who will take risks**. He wants people who are not stuck in the way they have always thought about things. And he gets a few of them: James and John and Simon and Andrew.

Probably their families were not too keen on this. All of a sudden all these hands that helped with the business are gone, off doing something else. But it's very clear this is not a lark. This is not a joy ride. **This is a vocation, a calling from above**. And it has a certain sort of gravity to it. So these men, although I would never call them grave, they are nonetheless **serious but open-minded. They are willing to change and to learn**. That's the kind of people Jesus calls. **They are the only kind of people that can be his followers**.