**Lay Down Your Nets**

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**Holy Cross Catholic Church**

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The first chapter of Mark’s Gospel describes how Jesus began his public ministry. After his forty days of quiet listening in the desert, Jesus went to Galilee. There, walking along the seashore, the Lord came upon Simon and Andrew. The brothers were fishermen…casting their nets into the sea… Jesus said to them, “Come after me and I will make you fishers of men.”

A little further down the beach, Jesus came upon another pair of fishermen, James and John. These brothers were in a boat, mending their nets with their father, Zebedee. Jesus called them both and they joined Him, leaving their father… and the life they knew… behind them.

When these men dropped their nets from their calloused hands, they left behind the familiar tools of their daily work… they left behind the world they knew … to begin a completely new direction in their lives as the first followers of Jesus.

If you’re like me, you may envy these first Apostles: the Lord spoke to them live and in person. He lived in their neighborhood. He walked among them. They didn’t have to wonder if they were using their gifts in the way God wanted them to. His message and his call were clear.

If you are like me, the noise of modern life…activities…health challenges….the needs of our families… all can drown out God’s call. In recent months, the dark uncertainty that overhung our country seems to have lifted. The concern so common just a short time ago seems to have given way to a return to the normal…I know that I’m feeling comfortable tending daily to my nets.

At the same time, I know God is calling…because He is ***always*** calling.

Where is that call in our world today? What will cause us to drop our nets and follow Him?

His message may be in the face of our neighbors here in Indian River County who continue to face personal and economic challenges that rival those to be found anywhere in our country. Unemployment in our county continues above 15%, making our local employment challenges among the worst in our country. If we were a state, our unemployment rate would be higher than 49 other states.

In normal times, 20% of local school children receive assistance in the form of subsidized school meals. This year, more than one-half of the children in our schools qualify for this poverty assistance.

You may have noticed the more frequent second collections to support our Parish Community Outreach Fund. Your financial support helps our Parish respond the ever increasing number of requests from individuals who arrive at the Parish Office looking for help. Many have nowhere else to turn.

Jesus may not be walking along our beach as he did in Galilee. But He told us that we could find Him in the needs of the poor… and the infirmed… and those many others needing our help.

He may not be calling us with his voice. Instead, the needs of God’s most beloved call to us every day … if we will only listen…and become doers of God’s word.

Today is our annual Community Service Sunday here at Holy Cross. It is a day each year when we take a moment to reflect upon God’s call to service in our lives. It is the day when we can remind you that the Community Service Ministry is here within our Parish to help you respond to God’s call to service in your life. Our role here at Holy Cross is to provide members of our Parish with opportunities to serve our community with their hands… and with their hearts.

We offer you a variety of opportunities to serve.

Through the Education Foundation’s Sneaker Exchange Program, you can work to help young schoolchildren select what for many is their first pair of new shoes ever.

We can help you become a reading mentor with Big Brothers and Big Sisters, helping a child solve the puzzle of reading.

You can help a family build a new life as a Habitat for Humanity volunteer, working on site or preparing meals to help those swinging a hammer.

We host holiday parties at St. Francis Manor and serve Thanksgiving Dinner at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Fellsmere.

You can help feed the hungry by sorting food at Harvest Food and Outreach or by bringing meals to shut-ins with the Senior Resource Association.

 And, during Lent , we will hold our second annual Lenten Day of Service event.

We have designed our programs to offer you the opportunity to answer God’s call for a couple of hours or for a couple of years. Accessing these opportunities is as easy as calling Pat Kroger in our Parish Office.

As I close, let me ask you to take a moment today to review your life…

Listen …can you hear the call of God’s most beloved through the noise of your daily life?

 Look at your hands. Are they so entangled with your own nets that you can’t use them to help those in need?

Ask yourself…If God called to me today would I be willing to put down my nets and follow him?

If you ask…God will answer…and move His Love into your life as you bring His grace to those He loves most.