

You've heard of the expression, "Three little words!" It usually means, "I love you!", and it is considered one of the most powerful phrases in our language - with just three little words.

Jesus uses just two little words today, "Follow me!" – and in many ways they are even more powerful in the impact they may have on us.

Jesus says, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people". I remember a school visit when the visiting priest asked the kids, "What do we need to do to catch people?" and one little boy answered, "Throw them in the water first!"

Well, many of us are floundering around in the sea of life and we need to be caught by Jesus to find our way to the life he has planned for us.

Jesus called Simon, and Andrew and James and John. They answered his call and they followed, immediately! Why? Well, what did those disciples have going for them in their lives when Jesus came? Nets to mend, unending drudgery so they could afford to pay the Roman taxes and just survive day to day, it was all they knew, but inside they yearned for another answer, for life to mean more.

Perhaps they had heard of Jesus, he was already teaching in their town, perhaps sub-consciously they had already had the desire growing when Jesus appeared and said those simple words.

When Jesus' voice called to them gently, "I will make you fishers of people!" They could hear the promise in the kind and gentle tones he used. How rough and hard the nets and ropes must have felt in their hands at that moment, so easy to just cast aside and then to clamber out of the rocking boat onto the solid land.

Jesus calls you and me with those same words today – what will our answer be? Will we follow? Will we do it immediately?

What does it take to answer that call? Well, first it takes Faith – faith to believe that God is in charge and really has our best interests at heart and faith to believe that we called to live in today and not the future and faith to believe that we can each make a difference, no matter how helpless we feel, because God is with us!

Jesus once asked his disciples, "Will the Son of Man find any faith on the earth?" Look around! We are a people who prefer to believe in ourselves, we trust in our weapons to protect us – not the love of God, we trust in our savings we hide away for our future to feed us twenty years from now while millions starve today, we trust in our own plans and forget we are called to follow God's will instead!

To follow means to change the way we live, to let go of the reins and give them to God, to open ourselves to suffering for our salvation!

What else does it take to follow that call? It also takes Hope – the kind of hope that lets us see that the kingdom of God is here in the middle of all the troubles of the world! It takes the kind of Hope to rise above the fear that dominates our society – the kind of Hope that fills our hearts and banishes worry about what comes next!

The newspapers sell fear and despair, economic failure, viruses, impending war. This is the mantra of our world, our culture of death, a cry of despair from those who cannot choose to follow. A follower of Jesus sees a different reason every day why the world is getting better and knows the future is brighter than anything we can ever imagine on earth!

What else does it take to follow that call? Finally it takes love! We will not follow someone, trust them, believe in them, and place our hopes in their leadership unless we love them. We need to love Jesus and remember how much he has done for us.

When we love someone, nothing they want seems too big to accomplish, when we love someone, our own desires take second place! Jesus has done more than just say those “three little words!” – he has proved how much he loves us. So now when he says those two little words, “Follow me”, we can respond with the same love for him.

A simple recipe – faith, hope and love! Jesus does not ask us to take on any challenge that he was not willing to take on himself, as one of us!

Today's gospel is a call to action for each and every one of us – young and old alike – to begin following Jesus! Where do we start?

That's the hard part! This challenge can freeze us on the spot and stop us from acting. The disciples didn't have 2000 years of reflection of Jesus's teaching or a lifetime of preparation to help make their decision – they just made it!

We are called to follow – to take action and to do it now! Lent begins a month, what better time than that to make a commitment to do something! We have all been given a heart and an imagination from God to see what needs to change, and what each of us called to do will be different from someone else.

Start with the Eucharist. Come and receive Jesus so that as you try to follow him, you will know he is there is your heart to keep you moving forward. Next, pray. Give God some quiet time and reflect on what is happening in the world that speaks to you – when you are ready to follow Jesus, the path for you to take will be clear!

We have plenty of activities and groups right here in the church that need helpers, we will hear from the Catholic Women's league today, we've heard from the Knights of Columbus, or perhaps you may take part in the Catholic Christian outreach program that is beginning, or so many other ministries and groups here at St. Mary's.

There are many good causes out in the world, groups trying to change things, peace groups, environmental groups, youth support groups, medical charities – you can't help seeing them if you just lift up your head from your own worries, open your eyes and look. Recognize what is calling you and act! Not next month, not next week – start today.

Find a quiet time this weekend to pray, so that each of us will decide how we will act! For some of our younger people, there may even be a call to the priesthood or religious life – don't be afraid – follow. For some of the mature men in the congregation there may be a call to become a deacon – don't be afraid – follow.

Jesus shows us he love us – more than by just saying three little words, “I Love you!” – but he shows how completely he loves us by trusting us to be like him, to do what he does – and more – and to pay attention to his two little words – “Follow me!”