

The Fish That Didn't Get Away

We have all heard stories about the extraordinary fish that got away. We might even have such a story of our own. Two of today's readings are fish stories, but with a slight twist. They are also "call narratives." Last week we reflected on the call to listen and to follow; this week it is a call to go out to bring God's mercy to others. This is a call to "catch" others, as one might catch fish—a metaphor that would have delighted fisher people.

In the beginning of the Jonah story, the prophet did not catch fish; one caught him. Later, the word he preached was very successful, his own spitefulness notwithstanding. The Ninevites were the sworn enemies of the Israelites, and Jonah did not want them to repent, but to be punished by God. Nevertheless, God's mercy was stronger than Jonah's spite. In the Gospel, Jesus calls his followers to set down their fishing nets and to launch into a life of catching people

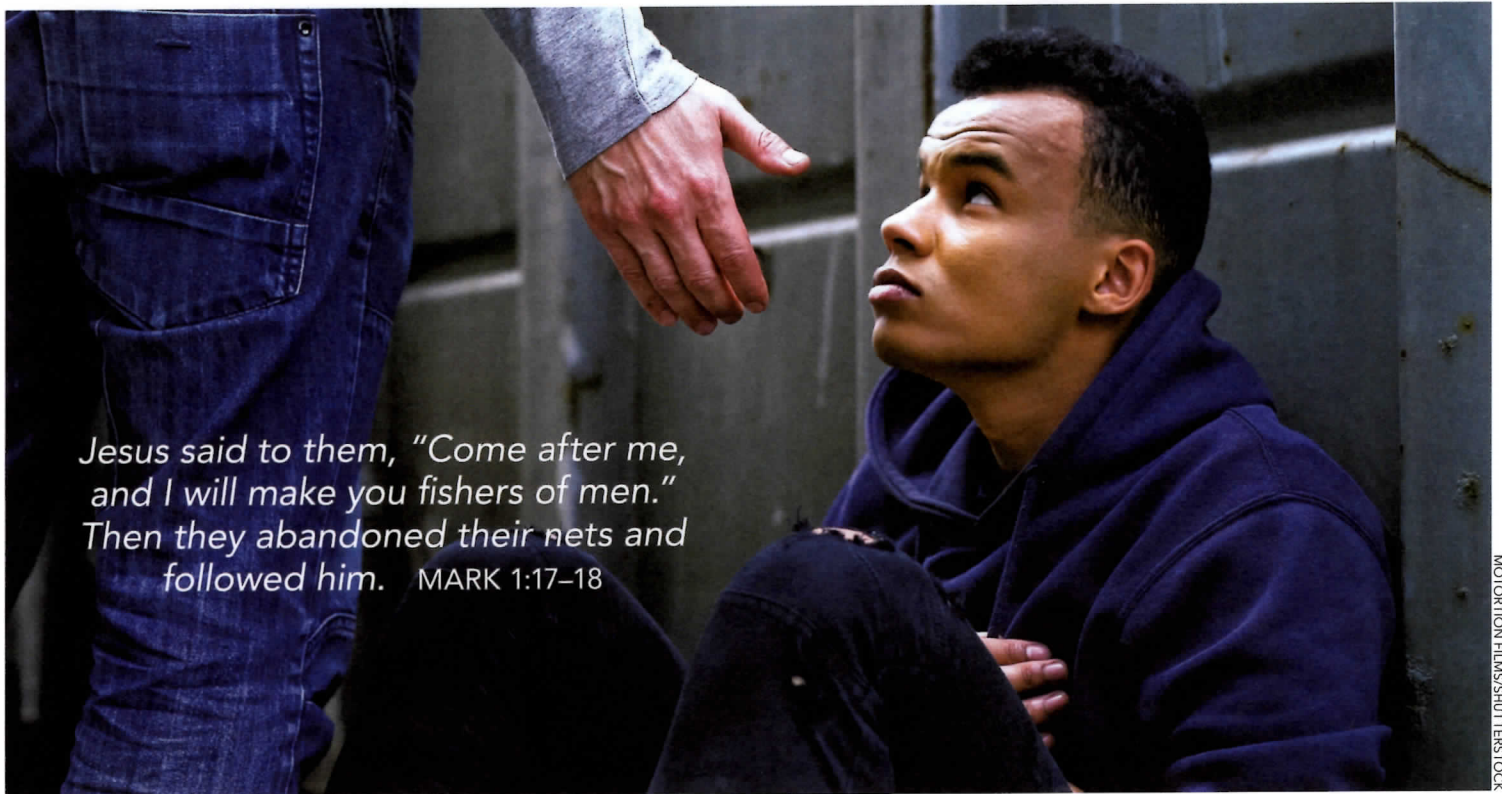
with the word of God. There is an eagerness here that is absent in the Jonah story. Furthermore, the disciples left their primary commitment—their patriarchal family—to accept Jesus' invitation.

As Pope Francis declared, we are all missionary disciples. Are we eager to respond, as were Jesus' disciples? Or do we think we should attend only to those whom we judge to be deserving? If so, have we forgotten that no one deserves God's mercy? It is a free gift to all.

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FOR *Reflection*

- ★ *In what ways does your manner of living proclaim the mercy of God?*
- ★ *Pray that you might realize these ways if you do not already.*



Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they abandoned their nets and followed him. MARK 1:17–18