



Walking the Walk

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Reflect on the nature of God's love for us and how we can respond to this Christian calling by living authentically

Seeing

No-one could accuse the modern-day Francis of not walking the walk, and as Pope he has made an art form of public displays of the kind of life he expects his church to live. In November 2013, we saw images of Francis embracing and kissing a horribly disfigured man, Vinicio Riva, in St Peter's Square.

He made headlines in 2013 and again in 2014 when, in the traditional re-enactment of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, Francis included women - the first Pope to do so - and Muslims in the ceremony.



Pope Francis is:

- *the advocate of those without a voice*
- *the champion of the disadvantaged,*
- *the Pope who continues to shun the trappings of office*
- *straining against the allure of power and privilege*
- *a spokesperson for social justice who is willing to challenge and offend the powerful to speak the truth*

The Drum / By Simon Smart Posted Tue 3 Mar 2015 at 2:16pm

In his APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION -GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE On The Call To Holiness In Today's World,

Pope Francis says:

"Strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord – each in his or her own way – to that perfect holiness by which the Father himself is perfect". (10)

The important thing is that each of us discern our own path, that we bring out the very best of ourselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in our hearts (1 Cor 12:7). We are all called to be witnesses, but there are many actual ways of bearing witness.

Francis is not creating something new for the church of the 21st century but recalling and breathing life into a key aspect of what the faith has always been about. Since the beginning, Christianity calls its followers to live in thankful response to a loving God.

A call is a response to a summons. It is a kind of surrendering. It is a challenge and a joy. Author C. S. Lewis wrote, "To follow the vocation does not mean happiness, but once it has been heard, there is no happiness for those who do not follow." Eric Liddell, an Olympic racer in the movie *Chariots of Fire*, summed up his call differently. "When I run," he said, "I feel God's pleasure."

Every person has a story to tell that helps reveal who God is in the world. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the gospel always. If necessary, use words." We can share the Gospel message, by our words and actions – our talking and walking.

In what ways do you 'walk the walk' and bear witness to the message of the Gospel in your daily living?

Share a response, in groups of three.

Listening

Scripture is brimming with 'call' stories. God called Noah to build an ark. God called an elderly Abraham and Sarah to leave their home and go on a journey to create a nation. God called Esther, telling her she was made "for a moment like this" (Esther 4:14). God called Mary, a teenage girl, to give birth to the Saviour of the world. God called Peter to be a rock upon which a church could be built and set him on a path that would transform the world.

In different stages and places of our lives, God calls us to new things. Our call never ends.

"Dear, dear Corinthians, I can't tell you how much I long for you to enter this wide-open, spacious life. We didn't fence you in. The smallness you feel comes from within you. Your lives aren't small, but you're living them in a small way. I'm speaking as plainly as I can and with great affection. Open up your lives. Live openly and expansively!"

Eugene Peterson, *The Message* 2 Corinthians 6:11-12.

Life together supports and challenges us to be a community of mission. We listen to the invitations of God that flow through our shared life and discern our shared responses. Based on a common trust in God, we offer our lives in service. In [our] ministry we find ourselves, like Jesus, broken open for our brothers and sisters. Truly, we are bread of life for others as Jesus has been for us.

Water From the Rock: Marist Spirituality #107

*I have called
you by name
you are mine*

Isaiah 43:1

Responding

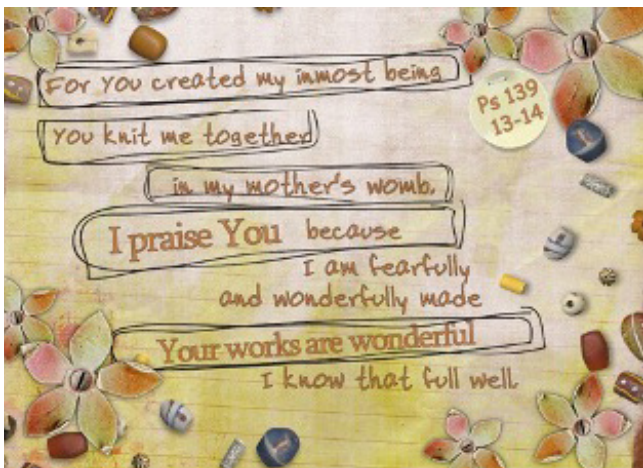
Our Personal Response to God's Call:

We may have doubts about our ability to serve God or wonder why God called us to serve him in the first place. We might well ask sometimes, "Who am I?", not because we lack the confidence that God will enable us to do what He has called us to do, but because we are utterly dumbfounded as to why God would use us in his ministry at all.

God has gifted us to make the world and the church better. That is what God calls us to do. To say 'yes' to our own call and then to say it in our community so that others may partner with us. They help us live out our call in practical and life-changing ways.

It is life-changing because God calls us to new things. Our call never ends.

Sit with the passages above, share in your group a word or phrase that resonates with you and what that means.



"When we invite children to create self-portraits, we offer them mirrors and encourage long, sustained study of their faces from this unfamiliar perspective. Then we ask them to re-create themselves on paper, weaving together the image that they see in the mirror with the person they experience themselves to be. Their portraits are eloquent statements of self."

Spend a minute looking at these self-portraits of Grade One students.



Choose one or two and share with your neighbour how you think, through their portraits, these children see themselves.

It might be interesting to ponder what our own self-portrait might express about who we really are called and created to be.

Invitation

Oh, do you have time
to linger
for just a little while
out of your busy
and very important day
for the goldfinches
that have gathered
in a field of thistles
for a musical battle,
to see who can sing
the highest note,
or the lowest,
or the most expressive of mirth,
or the most tender?

Their strong, blunt beaks
drink the air
as they strive
melodiously
not for your sake
and not for mine
and not for the sake of winning
but for sheer delight and gratitude –
believe us, they say,
it is a serious thing
just to be alive
on this fresh morning
in the broken world.

I beg of you,
do not walk by
without pausing
to attend to this
rather ridiculous performance.

It could mean something.

It could mean everything.

It could be what Rilke meant, when he
wrote:
You must change your life.

Mary Oliver

This poem offers an invitation to change.
What does this mean to you?

Let us pray together:

Mary our Good Mother...pray for us

St Marcellin Champagnat...pray for us

St Mary of the Cross McKillop...pray for us

*And let us always remember...to pray for
one another*

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