

After the Heart of Jesus ...

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him.



This Sunday we hear the gospel story of the call of the first Apostles, four fishermen, Andrew, Peter, James, and John. They weren't looking for a teacher or Messiah or anyone else to follow. They were casting nets and mending nets in their boats. In the middle of their daily labors, Jesus called them to follow him. I am always struck by the immediacy of their responses – Andrew and Peter left at once, James and John even left their father behind.

This was only the beginning of their story. Since we know the end of the story, we might be tempted to read into their first actions the knowledge that they would be life-long followers. In reality, the initial call of Jesus was for their here and now. There were plenty of other disciples who initially followed Jesus and later abandoned him. This is made clear in Chapter 6 of John's gospel when many listeners could not accept Jesus' teaching on the Bread of Life.

In other words, the first four followers' response was not so much a "Lord, I will follow you for the rest of my life," but more a "Jesus, I will come with you today without reservation." That is how their life with Christ began, with a simple invitation to come and see and follow. That is how life with Christ continues to begin, even in 2008, with the simple invitation to come and see and follow. The disciple's response is to say "**Here I am.**"



"**Here I am**" was the theme of last weekend's Discovery Retreat for our high school teens. It was an amazing experience for the 80 participants. I was able to experience glimpses of the talks and dinners and celebrations of Reconciliation and Mass. The presence of the Holy Spirit was so moving. Congratulations and thank-you to **Karen Campe** and the adult leaders and to the retreat teen co-directors **Ken Bates** and **Justyna Wojnowska** and all the other teens that helped staff the retreat. They had some amazing Praise and Worship time in Church (see picture left), and some of the team also performed a powerful skit for reconciliation that I have asked them to perform during our upcoming Parish Lenten Mission.

Please mark the dates of **February 17 to 20** on your calendars for our Parish Lenten Mission. In the spirit of the upcoming Lenten theme of Healing, the Mission will focus on the gift of healing that Christ brings to our lives. Four

unique nights of prayer will culminate in a Healing Mass celebrated by Father Mario on Wednesday, February 20. Please invite your neighbors, families, and friends to join us for this special time to meet Jesus who heals our hearts and lives.

It is hard to believe, but Lent will be here in just a week and a half. **Ash Wednesday in on February 6.** We have changed the previous Ash Wednesday schedule to add an additional Mass for the school at 10:00 AM. We will also have Masses at 6:30 AM, 8:15 AM, and 7:00 PM. Prayer services will also be held at 12:00 Noon and 5:30 PM.

This week we celebrate Catholic Schools Week. There will be opportunities to visit our school for open houses for both our school families as well as those who might be interested in sending their children to St. Walter School. Even though I am personally the product of public school education and what we called CCD, I love being at a parish that has a Catholic school. We can be proud of many things about our Catholic school, especially in being the largest school in the Joliet Diocese and having the best principal, bar none, in Mrs. Mary Lloyd. Success in any school, public or parochial, just doesn't happen by itself; it is worked at by teachers, administrators, caring parents, and hard-working students. This week we celebrate the dedication of all those who help "Light the Way" at St. Walter School. May we all help to light the way as we strive to follow ...



After the Heart of Jesus!

Father John