

In today's Gospel, when Jesus says to the fishermen, "Follow me," we are told that the fishermen left their nets and followed him. They had a normal life, working and living like anyone else. But these ordinary men left everything behind and followed Jesus. During his ministry, Jesus met many people. He was admired by many, while others looked for Him, because they only needed a miracle or a special favor. Only few people saw in Jesus, the Son of God, who was going to give direction, purpose, and meaning to their lives. These fishermen accepted the call to live in a new reality that Jesus calls the Kingdom of Heaven. And they quickly understood that the kingdom also had obstacles.

Jesus' greatest adversary was not demons or the power of oppression, but the belief that nothing can really change, that heaven might be different, but that history will always repeat itself. Currently, many people really admire Jesus, but only few are willing to follow Him. According to some statistics, more than 75% of Americans claim to be Christian. It could mean there are 262 million Americans who are Christian. But in their midst, millions of people, including children, are experiencing starvation, poverty, rejection, exploitation, diverse forms of discrimination and other needs. And every day in this Christian nation, we have too many episodes of hatred, violence, racism, crime and xenophobia. Why do we have this discrepancy? Is Jesus really our Lord and ruler? Are Christian principles really the foundation of our society?

Unfortunately, many people who admire and like Jesus have little interest in actually living out his teachings. Perhaps we are not followers but simply fans. Often, we come to church, put an envelope in the basket and like being associated with Jesus. We get close to Jesus to get the benefits, but we don't want Jesus to require anything from us. We may like Jesus, we get close to Jesus, but we don't want to serve in His Church, support the needy, or forgive others. We are fans of Jesus, but not followers. Jesus fans may say, "I like Jesus but don't ask me to love my neighbor, to be inclusive with the foreigner, or to talk about righteousness.

My brothers and sisters, Jesus calls us to actually become disciples, followers. And we are not supposed to avoid the call by saying, "I am too old," or "I am too young," or "I

am too busy." God has given us the ability to do what He wants us to do. We just need commitment, dedication and faithfulness from within. The disciples were not the most gifted people in the world. But they were open to God's grace and accepted the call to transform their world according to God's will. The disciples were women and men who were open enough to be part of the transformation that God wants to see in this world. We also are challenged to leave behind our comfort zone, to accept Jesus as our Lord, and be ready to continue growing in love, faith, compassion, and service, with humility and righteousness.

America needs disciples willing to grow in their commitment to follow Jesus more than ever, and today's Gospel asks us: So, what are we? Fans - or followers?

The Universal Prayer  
Sunday 25th January 2026  
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Celebrant:

Sisters and brothers, with the Universal Church we observe this *Sunday of the Word of God*, by which we grow in love and respect for the message of salvation.

1. That Pope Leo, in his ministry as successor of St Peter, will nourish the Church constantly with the word of God.

We pray to the Lord.

2. That we will spend time each day reading and reflecting on the word of God as found in our Bible and so grow in friendship with Jesus, experience the protection of the Father, and be guided by the Holy Spirit.

We pray to the Lord.

3. That like the fishermen, we who have received the call to follow Jesus in our baptism, will be joyful witnesses to him.

We pray to the Lord.

4. That as the Catholic Church will deepen its commitment to the will of Jesus, that his followers be one in him.

We pray to the Lord.

5. That we will not give up on praying for justice and peace around the world, especially for places where violence is so destructive and political manipulation so disturbing.

We pray to the Lord.

6. That more young women and men receive the call to serve the Church, as religious sisters with the Daughters of St. Mary of Guadalupe, and as priests for the Diocese of Raleigh.

We pray to the Lord.

7. That the souls of our departed relatives, friends, and parishioners, will rest in God's eternal peace.

We pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

God our Creator, as we journey through life, you are our light and help, bring us into your heavenly home where we can savor your sweetness.

Through Christ our Lord

Amen