

## From the Desk of Our Pastor ...

### Three Key Takeaways

We have now come to the end of our 6-week homily series, "You Can Do Hard Things." Though the series is over, the content of the series is and will be the essential message of my pastorate at Saint Joseph. In other words, we must all become missionary disciples. We have established a clear understanding of what this means for us as individuals and a congregation through this homily series. Here are some key takeaways.



First, Jesus comes to us, like He did to the disciples, while mending our nets. We are all "fishermen" in that we have an earthly occupation that is suitable for our natural gifts, whatever that may be. He invites us to follow Him so that we might become "fishers of men." This transition of identity is crucial. We see something like this in Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol where Scrooge is in conversation with Jacob Marley's ghost. Scrooge says, "But you were always a good man of business, Jacob..." "'Business!' cried the ghost, wringing its hands again, 'mankind was my business.'" Jacob never made this transition of identity in life; his ghost found out too late. "People," my dear brothers and sisters, are our business here at SJCC.

This transformation of our identity into "fishers of men" leads us into our second takeaway which we find in our Gospel reading this week. Jesus sees a leper and is "moved to pity." This Greek verb often describes Jesus' reaction to people. He sees us as we really are in all our human woes. In a way, we are all lepers in that sin is a kind of spiritual leprosy, a deformation of the soul. We must see people as Jesus sees people in all their plight, both physical and spiritual. In our sin, we really do not "see" people as they really are, but only images of our own judgement, with little or no genuine compassion. We have got to ask, even beg, the "Lord of the Harvest," to send laborers into the harvest fields of Eldersburg and Sykesville. Who could these laborers be if not you and me?

The third takeaway is the healing of the leper. Now here we enter the realm of the impossible. Jesus always expects us to do everything He does. This expectation is founded on the fact that we have the same Holy Spirit, the same source of power, as Jesus does. We must believe that we can do anything that God places before us, just as Jesus did, whether it be a miraculous healing, and/or anything that is above and beyond our natural powers. To live "naturally" is failure in our Christian lives. This is the only way that we bring glory to God, reach beyond our walls, and set the world around us on fire.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must see what Jesus sees and do what Jesus does. St. Paul captures this well when he boldly tells us in the Epistle reading, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." We must all get to the point where we can invite anyone into our lives and say, "do you want to know who Jesus is and how to live the Christian life? Just watch me." This does not mean that we are "perfect" in the way of sinless perfection, but perfect in the way of being rightly oriented to God the Father through Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Only then will we fulfill our statement, "Embracing Christ's Life, and Reflecting His Love."

Father John  
Pastor