

# Spiritual Readings for the month of January 2024

Please choose a reading and questions for reflection.

## Stepping off Familiar Path

*“Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matthew 4.19)*

Perhaps in itself a mystery, their encounter by the shore of Sea of Galilee started it all, a turning point in their lives. First, there were Simon Peter and Andrew, later James and John – each pair brothers - they boldly heeded and trusted the Messiah as He began his public ministry.

They were men of no distinctive qualities and stature – all ordinary, living their quiet lives. Of the occupational groups, Christ might have chosen fishermen to sign on to his public ministry due their patient, optimistic predisposition in waiting and hoping – essential to their role of casting a wide net which extended well beyond the Sea of Galilee in years that followed.

Leaving behind their trade and families, they saw their routines supplanted by unfamiliarity. First, they faced ridicule, even threat of bodily harm and - for some much later, floggings and martyrdom taking place sometime after the death of Jesus. Their future strikingly entailed hardships and burdens. Christ’s precepts such as Eternal Life could also had been initially perceived as ambiguous, only to become increasingly clear to them upon His death and Resurrection. Early on, they might have been oblivious to new meanings and revelations but each was ready to let go his hold on the circumstance of his life, and embark on a new phase.

And who was Jesus to these men? In His humanity, he was a stranger, one they hardly knew... yet whose invitation they responded to and entrusted the rest of their lives.

Their choice by other people’s standards then and now could be untenable. These men had every moment to quit yet they chose to be united in and true to Him through His final days and beyond to be healers to the afflicted and evangelists to the world. In so many respects, their reason could be transcendent and deeper than being told to follow Him.

### ***Reflection Questions***

1. Describe a time you had made a commitment to change certain aspects of your life. Where do you see God in that time?
2. In one concrete way, how can you bear witness to and participate in discipleship? How does your involvement in the Society support your vocation as a disciple?
3. How does growing in discipleship factor in addressing the pain you encounter in your life?

***Let us pray...*** Lord, thank you for bestowing on us the grace of another year. May You help us embrace this new year with boldness in dealing with the possibilities You lead us to. Bless and strengthen us for Your service always. Expand our hearts and minds to seek fresh ways to issues to better serve those in need.

## Reflection: Living His and Our Role

*In his preaching, John the Baptist proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me, I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals," (Mark 1.7)*

John paved the way for the Messiah's coming, urging people to repent. This and others came to be, as Isaiah foretold ages ago.

*As he was not the light, he came to testify to the light in order that all believe through him.* With his unique role in our Salvation, John humbly acknowledged the Mighty One - the Wise Teacher, Great Healer, and Good Shepherd - would soon come and embark on His public ministry. His sole mission of preaching and baptizing in the River Jordan was in preparation for Christ.

The New Testament is replete with stories and exhortations on taking up different roles. The first believers through their varying roles nurtured the early Christian communities. St. Paul affirms the use and sharing of unique gifts entrusted to each member of His Body according to grace that allow members to assume roles – minister, teacher, exhorter, giver and leader - and contribute to the enrichment of the faith community.

Suggested change:

Our Conferences draw support from all members who contribute for good measure their time, quietly and oftentimes, unheralded in a variety of activities that all lead to support of our outreach. Some take charge of food pantries, ensuring perishables are kept in the most hygienic and orderly condition. Others go out of their way regularly to procure food vouchers and other essentials for our families-in-need. Most cheerfully help out with bundle-up collections and packing Thanksgiving and Christmas hampers. Some members take up Executive positions to ensure the continued efficacy of the Conference, accepting leadership roles to encourage and support their fellow Vincentians, and mentoring others to be successful in their positions.

### ***Reflection Questions***

1. How do you experience a personal call from the Lord to actively take part?
1. What rejuvenates you in continuing with a role?

***Let us pray...*** Gracious Lord, may You give us this new year a fresh and vigorous start. May we experience You in our relationship and active involvement, offering peace, friendship and optimism to those we share the commitment to help those in need.