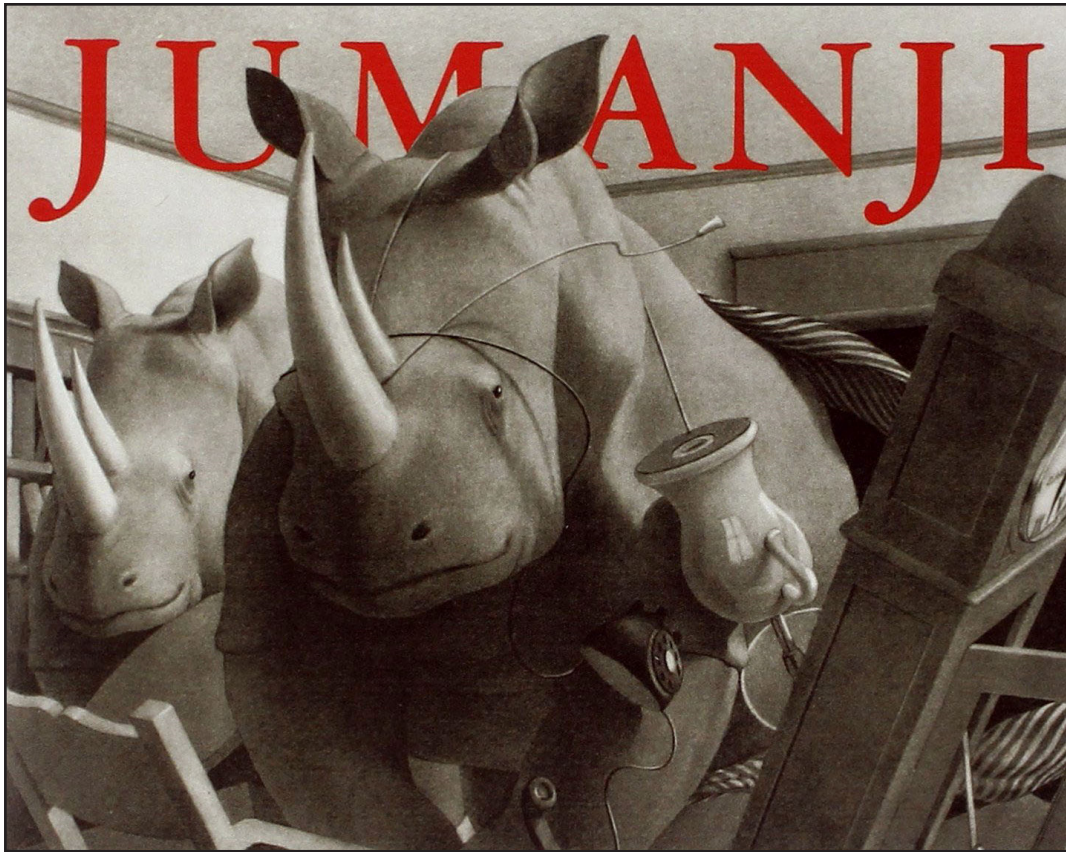


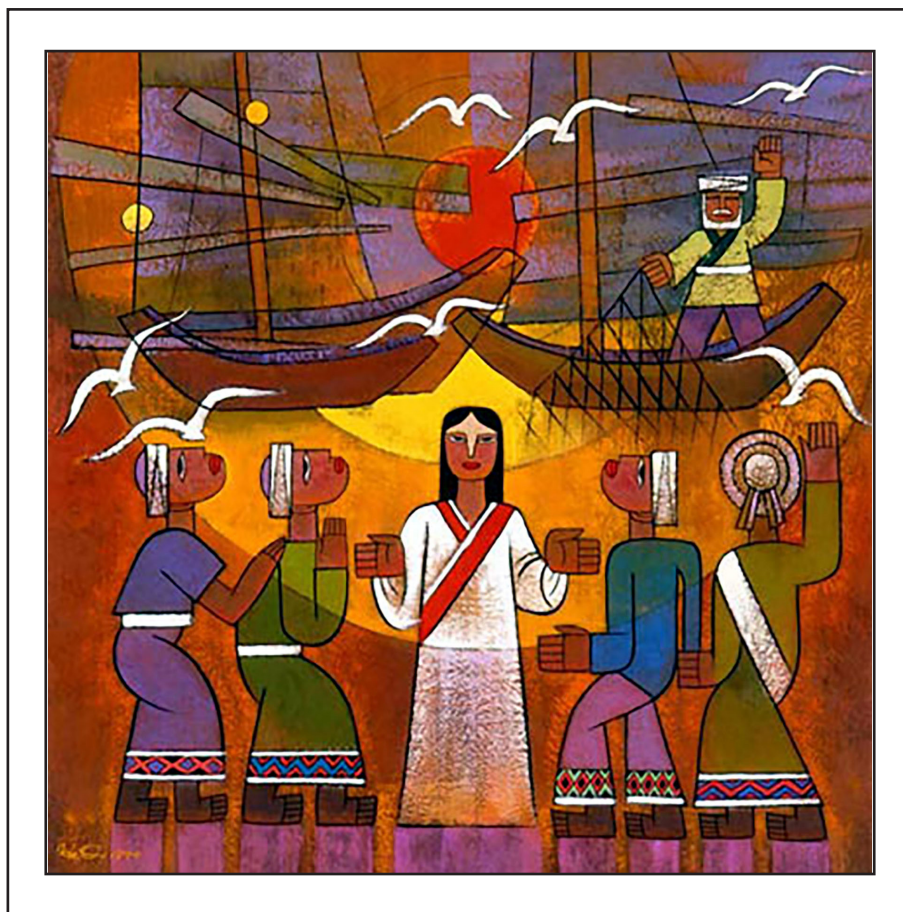
Living Grace

Cycle A 3rd Sunday
Ordinary Time

“CALLED TO LIFE EXTRAORDINAIRE!”



*In **Jumanj**, two bored and restless children left on their own for an afternoon find more excitement than they bargained for in a mysterious and mystical jungle adventure board game. Rain, rhinoceroses, and monkeys - in the house?! Boredom is a common complaint of children, and a stampede of jungle animals through the house is the perfect cure. When they agree to play the game, they also agree to enter into a wild new world. While playing the game, Peter and Judy learn that virtually anything can happen, and to be ready to expect the unexpected.*



CALLING DISCIPLES

*Mixed Media Painting by He Qi
China ~ 2001*

EXPLORING THE ART:

All painters, regardless of their style, orchestrate their work by combining and arranging shapes, lines, colors, textures and spaces. These visual elements may be arranged in any way the artist desires. With them, an artist may paint a still-life, a portrait, or a scene and may make it look "real." Some other artists may choose to use those elements to create an abstract version of the subject, or to not refer to a subject at all.

ANCIENT STORY, MODERN ART

When it was common for most people to be illiterate, art was an important means of communicating historical events, stories, and ideas. Unlike the Middle Ages, today most people are able to read the words of Matthew's account of the calling of the disciples, and an illustration of it may not contribute anything more than what is learned from the written word.

He Qi is a modern artist who uses harmony, color, shapes, and patterns to provide insights into the biblical story of Jesus making "fishers of men". His figures, boats, and sails remain recognizable, but they are not illustrated literally. The shapes are defined by thin dark lines and the colors within them are mostly flat. Jesus is on shore in the center foreground and is flanked by disciples; three of them are looking up at the sky. The disciple on the far right has turned and is waving to a lone fisherman on a boat - the white beard suggests that this is Peter.

Living Grace

READ-ALoud STORY



ABIDE IN ME

Vicki Shuck, Esperanza Arts

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love.

~ John 7:7-9

Read-aloud video link:

JUMANJI

Written & Illustrated by Chris Van Allsburg

Sunday Gospel

MATTHEW 4:12-23

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested,
he withdrew to Galilee.
He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea,
in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali,
that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet
might be fulfilled:

*Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles,
the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light,
on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death
light has arisen.*

From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say,
"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

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.

He went around all of Galilee,
teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom,
and curing every disease and illness among the people.

Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

CALLED BY JESUS, OUT OF THE DOLDRUMS OF LIFE, INTO THE GREATEST JOURNEY OFFERED ON EARTH AND IN HEAVEN.

In these both our Gospel story and our children's stories this week, we see a very similar dynamic at work. Siblings, Judy and Peter in Jumanji, and Andrew and Peter in the Gospel, are both presented with a great invitation. This invitation comes to both sets of siblings while in they are in the midst of the doldrums of everyday life routines and existence. Both pairs are faced with the invitation together, but each person must decide on their own if they will accept it. The question posed to both sets of siblings is, "Will you become players in an unpredictable and incredible adventure?" They are asked to participate. They do not have to say yes, but they do!

"Read the instructions carefully to make sure you are willing to engage in the consequences" the directions of Jumanji warned.

"Especially designed for the bored and the restless" were the last words.

Peter and Andrew were faced with a similar predicament as they fished on the Sea of Galilee. Their traditional routines were satisfying and productive, but Jesus knew their hearts were ready for more. In the invitation to "follow him", Jesus called forth something from within each one of them. Jesus' adventure, much like the game of Jumanji, would eventually lead them into a world of great peril, but also a life of great joy. To say yes, to choose willingly, was to engage in play. Playing a game, not just watching, immediately offers a new reality. From the minute Peter and Andrew said "yes", just like Peter and Judy in our children's story, they began to expect the unexpected. All four players could never go back, they're lives would never be the same. The magic had begun.

In following Jesus, we also say "yes" to becoming explorers, builders, artists, and inventors of a new world. Through the mission of Jesus, we are called to be co-creators, with the Holy Spirit, working to bring heaven to earth. When we look at our lives from this perspective, from this truth of God's plan for each of us, we see an incredible adventure that makes our hearts beat with all that we are made for. No doldrums or boredom of routines here!

It is important that we modern day Catholic Christians understand that, just like Jesus' original disciples in the biblical times, each of us also has to respond individually to the invitation to be a follower of Jesus. It is not enough to sit back and watch - we are all called to play this out-of-this-world game!

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

YOUR STORY: How do you experience a game if you watch it? How do you experience a game if you are a player? What is the difference? How do you decide which role you are going to play? When you are invited to play a game is it hard to decide what to do? Why do you hesitate? What are the risks of playing? What are the risks of not playing? Which choice holds the potential of regret?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: How were Judy's and Peter's lives changed through choosing to play the game? Did they have any control once they decided to start playing the game? How did they respond to the challenges. What were the results?

THE GOSPEL STORY: How about Peter's and Andrew's lives? How has the world changed because Peter and Andrew chose to play? Peter was the first leader of the church after Jesus died. What is that person called and who is our leader today? Does the Pope have to choices to make, also?

What would the world be like if Peter had not chosen to play? How important is it for the future of the church and the world for you to follow Jesus and to choose to play?

Biblical Background

MATTHEW 4:12-23

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: It is exciting to begin to move from the area of the Jordan River near Jericho to the north. Nazareth, as we know, is where Jesus grew up and the community that claimed him as their own. Nazareth is in the hill country of the Judean Hills. In the Middle East a lot is known about a person by knowing where they are from, and it is an important distinction that Jesus is referred to as Jesus of Nazareth. As he begins his public ministry, Jesus heads out of his hometown of Nazareth into the Northern Regions of Galilee. Israel was divided up into regions based on the 12 tribes. A region was like a county is to us today. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali, were the "counties" and beautiful countryside surrounding the Sea of Galilee. Additionally, an important international trade route called the via Maris (way of the sea) also went through there. For the ministry and message of Jesus, it was a perfect geographical location. Strategically, Nazareth was away from the city capital and the old traditional ways of thinking of the Pharisees and Sadducees. It was in the hillside towns where new ideas and open hearts and minds could cultivate a new message. In this powerful passage the geographical context of Jesus calling his first disciples plays a very significant and strategic role. The town Capernaum, on the Sea of Galilee, is the community where Peter grew up and an interesting place to start. Just as John the Baptist passed on the next chapter of God's great mission to Jesus, it is here that Jesus passes on the next chapter to Peter.

TERMS: Synagogue In Jesus' day the synagogue was a gathering place, like a community center. The men of the community would meet there to study and pray. Jesus would meet with them there, along with other men in the community, and in a culturally understood Jewish notion, argue the meaning of various scripture texts and current events.

Fisherman Peter, his brother, and their friends were not what we might think of as poor, simple fishermen. In the first century, fishing on the Sea of Galilee was a major industry in the region. Families had partnerships and ran fishing businesses vital to the finances and economy of the community. For them to leave their nets, did not mean that they were released from the responsibility of providing for their families.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: *"When Jesus heard that John had been arrested..."* In last Sunday's Gospel, John tells us that Jesus is about to take this whole party to the next level. John announces the progression from his baptizing in water, to Jesus' baptizing in the Holy Spirit. Jesus takes the reins from John by continuing the baptisms, but soon starts taking the next steps on his own. To understand the context, we realize that John's ministry had been successful, he passed the mission given by God to him and his disciples on to Jesus. What takes it to the next level is that in addition to baptisms, Jesus begins to perform miracles and heal people, "curing every disease and illness among the people". Everyone sees that Jesus is a miracle worker and healer. This takes the action and presence of the divine working within Jesus to an apparent strength beyond John who "simply" baptized and offered the forgiveness of sins.

INSIGHT INTO MEANING: Jesus' act of calling disciples is a common event in the Middle East. If someone has a grievance, that person will invite others to join them in solving the grievance. In a unified group, there is more strength. Group orientation was and is still a foundation of the culture of the Middle East. Here Jesus is beginning to form his group. This understanding of relationship permeates the Bible in both the Hebrew and Christian Testaments.

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: What risks are involved in choosing to follow Jesus? What are the rewards?

GOSPEL CHARACTER QUALITIES: RISK TAKING
ABUNDANT LIFE

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Invite another family over for a night of playing board games together. How does the evening work to enliven your relationships? How does it work to challenge your relationships? How did everyone grow and connect throughout the night? Would you have connected on the same level if you choose to watch a football game together? Discuss the growth benefits of the choices to engage in life as a full participant versus as a spectator.