

Week 21

Jesus Calls Others to Join Him

Guide: Being Drawn to Him



As Jesus reveals his story to us, we can't help becoming drawn to him. This week, we have the privilege of contemplating Jesus as the one who calls companions to service with him. If we were inclined, in the past, to view God's calls to us as obligations about which we might be ambivalent, we are not there now. In this retreat, we are growing in a sense of such attraction to the person of Jesus and his way of responding to his own call from God. We are being drawn to be with him with deep desire.

The Scripture readings this week give us the text of various *calls* that the Gospel writers present for us. Throughout this week, let them flow in and out of consciousness. Any time we can take to prayerfully imagine any of these scenes will enrich the week. We can enter into the scenes, to see and to hear, to be caught up in the drama of the call-and-response.

This week's real power is in our ability to let it be one in which we become keenly faithful, throughout each day, to a sense of Jesus' being with us in our day. As I awake, prepare for the day, go to do my work, interact with people, take breaks, experience a range of emotions, make mistakes, struggle to be zealous, find opportunities to be compassionate, make tough decisions, experience the joy of loving and being loved, and return to sleep with grateful prayer—in all of my day—I can savor the reality of Jesus calling me to *join him* in saying "yes."

We are experiencing the power of this retreat. Praying over and over for the grace *to know him more intimately, to fall in love with him more deeply, and to be drawn into the pattern of his own life more completely* does indeed transform our lives. Love changes the way we make choices because love changes what we desire. The more we fall in love with Jesus the more we love what he loves. Being with him becomes a growing desire.

Use all the helps this week. The practical helps will help name three degrees of being with Jesus. Our journey is one that will call us to rearrange the choices of our lives to allow us to be more and more with Jesus. The one who asks us, "What are you looking for?" knows our answer, and always invites us to "Come, follow me."

Some Practical Help for Getting Started This Week

It is said that imitation is the highest form of praise. That saying proves to be quite true as we progress through this retreat in our everyday lives. Having experienced the love of Jesus for us, and focusing on the details of his birth and life so far, we are asking, "Lord, help me to be with you, to imitate you, in surrender and love."

We grow in this imitation. Our desire to be with Jesus transforms our lives. There is no desire to rebel from God completely. The love we feel in our hearts casts out a great degree of our selfish desires. With our eyes fixed on Jesus, it is very unlikely that we will give in to serious sin.

Love eventually transforms the heart even more. In time, we take on the desires of the other. Not only does selfish rebellion recede from my life but also a variety of things I had naturally *preferred* become less important. Before growing in such a love for Jesus and a desire to be with him in his mission, I would have said that, given the choice, I'd prefer to be rich rather than poor, to be honored rather than dishonored, to have a long life rather than a short one. In these options, and in hundreds more in my life, *what is best for me* would have been the focus and criteria for my choice. Now that is changing. As the attraction of love grows, I want *whatever* would help me be with and like Jesus. And, of course, this kind of love lightens our spirits and makes what might have been difficult or a challenge so much easier. We become more loving and compassionate, more generous and self-sacrificing, more courageous and just, throughout our daily lives.

Love that grows always desires deeper and deeper union. It's said that older couples, who have loved each other deeply all their lives, can anticipate each other's needs—if one is sick, the other will even desire the illness rather than see the other suffer from it. Freed from our previous rebellious desires, even our previous preferred ways of choosing, the desire for complete union can grow. In love, we come to want the experience of the other. If the other I love is in poverty or suffers or is rejected, I no longer want to stand apart so as to shield myself from the experience. It becomes natural for me to see the poverty or suffering or rejection as part of our relationship. I simply *want to be with the one I love*. The more I see Jesus giving himself to whatever is for the greater glory of God and service of others, the more my desire is to fall into the hands of a loving God, just as he did. As I see the poverty of his surrender, I want it too. As I see him stripped of recognition and purified in his desires, I want that too. And as I see him surrender his very life to the will of God, I desire to be one with him there as well. In the context of our contemplating Jesus' calling his disciples this week, we can *feel* our desire to go with him in his mission. We can ask, even beg, for a deeper degree of love to grow in us. Attraction leads to the desire to be *with*, which ultimately leads to the deep desire to be *one* with him.

We can recall these reflections as we wake each morning this week, at various background times throughout each day, and we can return thanks in the most tender of words at the end of each day. Our hearts are being prepared for the contemplations in the weeks to come.

For the Journey: Watching and Listening

We are considering these days the gestures of Jesus. Ignatius invites those making the Exercises to be so present in the events of the life of Jesus that we let those events almost happen in our own lives. We are so there that we are there watching and listening to this God-made-man coming alongside every human condition.

After being tempted by the Evil One, Jesus walked along the shore and called to two sets of fishermen. He was apparently so attractive that they left their former means of living to live lives that gave them their new meaning of life. Jesus came as light and here enlightens his first four followers. They made some initial choice to stay in the light.

As his early followers found out, staying in the light, staying enlightened, can be too brilliant, and so at times they drifted away in the shadows of doubt, resistance, and self-preoccupation. Jesus' response was always an encouraging invitation to return and reform. By his instructions and deeds of caring for his followers, Jesus gave them information about who he was and who they were. Information then leads to reformation and ultimately to conformation to the person who revered them enough to allow them to wander.

Jesus offered them signs or gestures that made his way of living worth a good try. This week and for the next few weeks, we are invited to see these gestures of Jesus in such a way that we might more closely consider our own reformation and conformation to his ways. He does not call to us from way up ahead, or above, but actually from beside and behind. In a strange mysterious way, we watch him in front of us, but he calls to us

from behind. He so reverences our freedom that he allows us to take this road or that, and he watches and follows. So here is this Jesus who we watch so as to follow, and then he follows our choices and watches how to more lovingly offer us gestures that prove his fidelity to us.

Our prayer this week centers on our awareness of his actions in the lives of the people who were called early in the public life of Jesus. Have we seen enough of his ways to be attracted to make some adaptive changes in our lives that will make him more available for other people to see his ways in our own? As with the early followers, we are not going to be perfect in staying in the brilliance of the light of his teachings. Our moving in and out of the light is how we follow him and why he follows us reverently and compassionately. The major changes in the lives of any human being are results of having deeply met other influential and impressive people. The prayer this week is a response to the gestures of a God who wants to be influential and impressive while still respecting our free choice. Is there a choice welling up in our prayer this week?

In These or Similar Words . . .

Dear Jesus,

I hear your call to me. I feel so deeply how you love and desire me to be with you in this journey. I watch as you call the disciples lovingly and with such friendship. You teach them and send them out into the world to heal and spread your message.

As I read about how you call the fishermen on the shore, I too hear your call. I want to go with you. I follow you down the beach, and you stop and turn so gently and look at me with such love. “What do you want?” you ask me.

I stand there on the beach in my bare feet and try to articulate what I feel in my heart. I want to go with you where you are going. I want to make choices in my life that bring me closer to you and make my life more like yours. I want to take your hand and walk with you into towns, into marketplaces, even into the places in my own life that frighten me.

I feel your call to me in such a direct, personal way and I see you loving me so deeply as I try to conform my life to yours. I know I am making a decision to adapt my life, to see things with your eyes, to make choices differently. And I see you watching me with love as I make these changes.

My dear, loving friend: Thank you for calling me to be with you so closely. Thank you for wanting me with you. Thank you for giving me this deep desire to be with you. My love for you is growing with each passing week, as we become better and dearer friends and as I feel your love for me. I want to be with you in a new and deeper way. Teach me. Let me live each day realizing that you are with me always, even when I fail in my desires. Allow me to feel you leading me in front and guiding me from behind.

Stay with me, dear one. Let me feel your love. Let me say “yes” to you. Thank you for staying so close to my side.

Scripture Readings

Mark 1:16–20

Luke 5:1–11

Matthew 9:9–13

John 1:35–42

Mark 3:13–19

Luke 9:1–6

Luke 10:1–12

Luke 9:57–62

Luke 19:16–28