

- Today's reading from the Gospel of Mark describes the beginning of Jesus' active ministry. It starts with the arrest of John the Baptist. This implies Jesus knew he would be persecuted and, like John, ultimately faced death for embracing his mission, but he does so anyway.
- Mark then immediately tells us what that mission is. Jesus boldly proclaims the Kingdom of God is at hand. We must leave our old ways behind and embrace the new life that he, the Messiah, brings.
- The Evangelist next shows the conversion of Jesus' first four followers, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, to highlight the radical nature of this good news and the transformative power of response to Jesus' call. When Jesus says come follow me, these men leave their family and their livelihood behind.
- These first followers were special in that they formed an intimate inner circle with Jesus not shared with the other disciples. They were the ones present at Jesus' mountain top Transfiguration. They were the ones Jesus invited to come and watch and pray with him apart from the others at the Garden of Gethsemane. John is the Beloved Disciple. And of course Peter is the rock to whom Jesus gives the Keys of the Kingdom.
- And yet, at one point or another, they all fail. They completely miss the point of Jesus' revealed glory at the Transfiguration. They

fall asleep at the Garden of Gethsemane. And Peter, the rock, outright denies Jesus not once, but three times.

- Jesus knew. He knew they would fail, but he called them anyway. He knew their faults, their weaknesses, all their limitations, and he still loved them as his closest friends anyway.
- When I was still studying to become a deacon I had a conversation with a fellow deacon candidate. He was an older accomplished gentleman and he was ordained in the class ahead of mine. I was hoping to gain some advice or wisdom from him given his greater experience both in our studies and in life in general.
- So, I was taken aback when he said to me, “I don’t know if I can go through with my ordination because I feel so unworthy.” I stared at him for a second and said, “Look, you’ve got to get over this. Of course you’re unworthy. I am unworthy. Every priest, bishop, sister, brother, deacon, lay person I’ve ever met has said they were unworthy.”
- God just doesn’t wait for us to get our act together. If he did there would be no disciples and the Kingdom of God would be empty.
- Every saint I have ever read about or heard of has said as much. None of us, including the saints, are worthy. We don’t choose Jesus. Jesus chooses us. He invites us into his Kingdom. The disciples in today’s Gospel were unworthy men. But such is the stuff that saints are made of. Such is the stuff that we are made of.

- We have no excuse for not responding to God's call. But worse than that, we have no excuse for not being saints. I have no excuse for not being a holy man right here, right now.
- My sin goes ever before me, but Jesus calls me anyway. Despite your weaknesses, despite your limitations, and your fears, right now, if you can hear my voice, Jesus is calling you. He is saying, "Come follow me." He is saying, "I love you."