

Back when I was looking for this job,
I would put my name in at a church
and then wait to hear back from their search committee.

After a week or so,
you stop checking your email every hour,
and just about the time you figure they've lost your application,
you get a message from some strange email address
with the subject line, "re: job opening."

But rarely did I open these emails up
right when I got them.

No, most of the time I'd see the email
and quickly close my computer.
And then I'd get up and go for a nice long walk.

You see,
you never know what that email was going to say.

Maybe it says,
"we loved your paper work
and we would like to schedule a time to talk with you over the phone."

Or maybe it says,
"You are a very gifted priest,
but after reviewing all of our applications,
we have decided to go in a different direction."

You just never know.

And so,
before finding out,
while the email could still say whatever I wanted it to say,
I'd get up and go for a walk.

And I would think about
what I wanted it to say.

There are all sorts of ways that
we figure out what we're called to do,
where we're called to go.

We get emails,
and we listen
and we hope,
and we try to figure out
what is the best place for us and for our gifts;

we try to figure out
where God is calling us.

Or sometimes,
if we are the prophet Jonah,
we hear the voice of God.

We hear it clear as day.

We hear the voice of God
telling us
exactly what we DO NOT want to do.

Sometimes,
if we are the prophet Jonah,
we get up and go as far as we can in the opposite direction.

We'd rather be in the belly of a whale at the bottom of the sea,
than go where God is calling us,
sometimes.

And when we act like Jonah,
we probably end up like Jonah:

We wind up doing
what God called us to do in the first place;

it's just that we do it covered in fish guts.

Are we ever called the way these disciples were called,
in today's Gospel?

It's a whole different kind of calling.

There's Jesus, walking by,
and he says,
"Get up and follow me;
I will teach you to fish for people."

And they got up,
and they followed him.

Immediately,
they followed him.
Immediately,
they started living the rest of their lives.

And that seems amazing to me.
Amazing that anyone could just get up
and follow a stranger down the beach,

into God knows what.

But it's even more amazing that Jesus calls them in the first place.

Why did he call them?
Were they particularly faithful?
Well, that's not what the story seems to say.
Were they going to be great preachers?
Not necessarily.

He just said,
"Follow me, and I will make you fish for people."

He didn't say,
 "Here's how to fish for people.
 Once you perfect the art,
 then come and find me."

When Jesus found Levi the tax collector,
 he did not say,
 "You are a sinner,
 and when you repent,
 then come and follow me."

To all of them,
 to everyone
 he just said,
 "Follow me."

Follow me,
 into God knows what.

Our sequence hymn today is one of my favorites.
 And it reminds me of all the ways that we are called.

Not only does Jesus call us *into* some difficult things,
 Jesus calls us *through* some difficult things,
 into some difficult things.

Over the tumult of a wild and restless sea.
 Over the heartbreak of an often unforgiving life.
 And out of the depths of a seemingly hopeless death.
 Jesus calls us.
 Calls us into something more,
 calls us into God knows what.

Why did he call those disciples?
What were they worth?

They didn't know what they were doing.
They didn't even know what they were getting themselves into.

But he called them,
just the same.

He called them,
and they were willing to risk losing who they were,
to follow him into becoming something new.

And we all know how it turned out.
They couldn't stay awake,
they couldn't pray,
they never understood,
they never wanted to hear the truth.
And in the end
they scattered like the dust,
just when he needed them most.

But Jesus called them,
just the same.

Why did he call them?
What were they worth?

And after all the betrayal,
why did he come back to them,
when he knew better than anybody,
what they were worth?

God only knows.

God only knows what kind of love that takes.
God only knows what it takes
to love a bunch of people who never seem to get it right.

God only knows.

God is calling us too.
And God knows what we're worth.
Worth creating a world.
Worth living for
and dying for.
Worth rising to new life.

God is calling you.
Calling me too.

Into what?
God only knows.

What we do know
is that God is calling us
to belong to him.

God is saying,
"Follow me."
Follow me into love
and kindness
and faithfulness
and..

and God knows what.