

The family is the nucleus of society. In the United States the family is seeing hard times. Couples live together without marriage. Pregnancies are regarded as problems. Children are meeting stepparents and stepsiblings. Divorce is more acceptable while alimony goes unpaid. The number of homeless is increasing. Some of the elderly receive inadequate care. And so on.

There is no perfect family. Every family faces challenges. And sometimes you may believe in your family but other family members do not, or your workplace makes it hard to be devoted to your family, or your government taxes you because you have a family. Support for the family needs to come from within the family but also from the society around it.

When Jesus began gathering disciples, he started with families. Matthew says he called two pairs of brothers: Peter and Andrew, and James and John. Jesus suggests that families make a good nucleus - even though James and John leave their father Zebedee in the boat, and even though brothers fought with each other in those days as much as brothers fight today.

This calling of the disciples takes place early in Jesus' ministry. He enters Capernaum, and Matthew remembers a passage from Isaiah, the passage we heard as today's first reading about a light coming over a land that dwelled in darkness. Isaiah was referring to the darkness that befell ancient Israel when the Assyrians took over their land. Imagine an America in which the al Qaida network not only worked terrorism, but actually took over our government, deported our leaders, eliminated democracy, replaced our currency and controlled our airwaves. That was Israel in the eighth century BC. Isaiah prophesied that they would see better days when a light would shine over their darkness. That's the image Matthew remembers when Jesus appears on the scene. The long darkness of spiritual despair ends with the coming of Jesus.

If you picked up the Sea of Galilee and dropped it in DeKalb County it would roughly fill the space between Cameron and Maysville, and many of you would lose your homes. Fishing was a major industry in those days. We know more about fishing now than they did then, but this much is still the same: There are a lot of fish that get away. When Jesus invited these brothers to become fishers of people, he was not promising a very high success rate. He

promised satisfaction. Families don't always have a high success rate, but they can provide satisfaction.

In a Catholic parish like ours we strive to follow Christ with the same enthusiasm of the first disciples and with the same nucleus, the family. We want to be a place where families can pray together, learn together and serve together.