

Our young sacristan, Shaun Curry, asked me the other day what I was going to preach about this weekend. I said, "I don't know." He asked, "What's the Gospel?" Shawn goes to Rockhurst High. I said it's in two parts: Jesus goes to Capernaum to start his new job, and his first sentence is, "Reform your lives! The kingdom of heaven is at hand." There's a lot of stuff packed into those ten words. Jesus demands an interior renewal, and says the kingdom is not far off, but at hand. It's another way of saying Jesus is the Son of God, present, right now. Then the second scene shows him choosing disciples. Shaun said, "At school they have us write about the Gospel each week. I wrote that Peter and Andrew gave up their job to follow Christ, and that John and James left behind their family. I think Matthew is telling us you may not have to leave everything behind, but each one of us is expected to follow Jesus in some way." I said, "Do you want to give the talk this weekend?"

I usually hate homilies that start out explaining how the preacher wrote the talk. You know, the ones that begin, "As I was thinking about what to say to you this morning"? But I liked this example because it shows how somebody today can meet Jesus. You don't have to be a first century Gallilean fisher; you can meet Jesus by reading the Gospel and writing your thoughts.

The question I ask about this Gospel is, "Just how do people come to meet Jesus?" If you were alive at the time, you could just meet him. If you lived 50 years later, you could read a Gospel for the first time. Even though what you read was influenced by the culture of the people who wrote it, you still met Jesus. So today, through our culture, our personal experiences, and this Gospel we can still meet Jesus. Here's a practical suggestion if you don't do this already. Read Sunday's Gospel at home sometime during the week before coming to Mass. Write out your reflection each week. Then talk about the Gospel with somebody else. Our parish home groups do something like this. And such conversation forms the backbone of our catechumenate. I know a pastor in New Jersey who's asked every committee and organization in his parish to begin every meeting with a twenty minute discussion on the Sunday Scriptures, so whether they're meeting about school uniforms or pea gravel, first they meet Jesus in the Bible, then they go to work. However we do it, I know it would enhance our faith if once a week we put down our fishing gear, relax in the boat, and just meet Jesus.