One month ago, we were celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. Dramatic things were happening in the world. In Jesus Christ, God had entered the world in a distant corner of a powerful empire; there were frightened shepherds startled by a host of angels announcing a great mystery; wise men from afar appeared unexpectedly and the news they brought unsettled a powerful and ruthless king.

Events seemed to be moving dramatically ... heading for a climax. And then everything just stopped. For thirty years.

“He was in the world”, wrote St. John, “but the world did not know him.” And then after thirty years, it was the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God was at hand.

“Come after me,” he called to Simon and Andrew, to James and John. Immediately they followed him, abandoning not just their nets, but the life that they had known.

“The Word had become flesh and they saw his glory, full of grace and truth. “ That’s how St. John put it.

I always wonder, as I imagine that scene, what the others thought as they witnessed Jesus’ call to his first disciples: Zebedee, the hired men, and all the other men and women whose livelihoods were bound up in the fishing trade and so found themselves on the shore on that particular day.

Jesus called, and some of the others must have heard it too. Did they see what the four men saw? Did they want to drop everything and follow that man? But he did not call them ... not to that life.

If they heard the call it was to a less outwardly dramatic life. Yet I think what they heard was still transforming.
God is still present in the world, through the Spirit sent by the Father and the Son. It is the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts, who reminds us of Jesus’ call to follow him. The Spirit calls us to follow Christ in the ordinary circumstances of our lives: in our families, our work, with our friends, though parish and community life.

Jesus told us to love our neighbors, especially those who are the least of his brothers and sisters. He asks us to work for justice and the common good, to proclaim the Gospel, and to come away and pray.

We don’t have to leave home and travel to distant and exotic lands to do as he asks. We don’t have to abandon the life we know if God hasn’t called us clearly to another life.

But, we have to do as he commands, and he has given us quite a list of things to do:

- Feed the hungry
- Instruct the ignorant
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Admonish the sinner
- Clothe the naked
- Bury the dead
- Shelter the homeless
- Counsel the doubtful
- Visit the sick
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bear wrongs patiently
- Forgive all injuries
- Pray for the living and the dead

It is quite a list. You don’t have to do them all, at least not all at once. But you do have to do them when they need to be done. Listen to your heart, to the movement of the Spirit telling you “now is the time, do this.”

For these are all things you can do in your home, in your neighborhood and most of all in this parish: feeding, instructing, clothing, visiting, sheltering, comforting, praying.

We have ministries that address all things. Pay attention to the needs, listen to the Spirit, then follow the call.