

February 6, 2022
5th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 5:1-11

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

Background:

The text for last Sunday's gospel ended with the people of Nazareth wanting to throw Jesus headlong over the hill on which their town had been built (Luke 4:29-30). In the remaining verses of the fourth chapter, Luke describes Jesus' visit to Capernaum, where he cures a man possessed by a demon. His teaching astonishes the people, because he speaks with authority. Jesus then goes to Simon's house and cures Simon's mother-in-law. After sunset, with the Sabbath officially over, people bring their sick for him to cure. Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus leaves Capernaum and seeks out a deserted place. The crowds find him and try to prevent him from leaving. In Mark's gospel, Peter is the one who tries to prevent Jesus from leaving (Mark 1:36-37). As Luke describes the incident, it is the people themselves who ask Jesus not to leave. This small shift avoids having Peter in the difficult position of trying to prevent Jesus from doing what he knows he must do.

Both Matthew and Mark have similar accounts of the events recorded in today's gospel. Both of them place it at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry, right after Jesus returns from the desert (Matt 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20). They also report that Simon's brother Andrew was also in the boat--a detail that Luke omits. Luke's description places the emphasis on Peter's unique relationship with Jesus.

Luke's placement in his gospel makes the response of the first disciples to Jesus' invitation to become his followers more plausible. To leave their families, professions, and property to become disciples of Jesus would have amounted to a total disregard for their responsibilities as men of their culture. Luke's placement of the text at least gives some background and time in which a life-changing decision would have been made by the disciples.

Focusing on the text that is today's gospel, the region of Gennesaret is in a fertile area near the northern part of the Sea of Galilee. The night is the best time for fishing. Throughout most of the text, Peter is referred to by his Jewish name, Simon. The exception is when he realizes the size of the catch of fish and attributes it to the divine power of God working through Jesus. All Peter can do is kneel before Jesus and ask him to depart. Such a gesture is very meaningful in this culture. Jesus is someone who has abilities that Peter does not. Being a disciple of Jesus requires personal sacrifice. At this point in the text Luke calls him "Simon-Peter," both his Jewish name and the name that Jesus will give him later in the text when Jesus names his apostles (Luke 6:14).

There is likewise a shift in how Simon addresses Jesus. When Jesus asks Simon to put out into the water and lower his net, Simon calls Jesus "Master" or "Rabbi." After the experience of the catch of fish, Peter refers to Jesus as "Lord." All those present, not just Peter, recognize the manifestation of divine power in what has taken

place. They are filled with astonishment and fear, the typical response to the near presence of God. Jesus reassures them with the exhortation, "Do not be afraid!" Usually when people are reassured with the greeting, "Do not be afraid," it signals more than reassurance. God is commissioning those involved in the encounter. God has not acted in an extraordinary way just to brighten the day for some weary fishermen. In the second part of that verse, Jesus tells Simon, James, and John that from now on they will be fishers of men. Luke indicates that the commissioning extends beyond James and John by stating that they left their boats and they followed Jesus.

Reflection Questions

1. Have you known someone who made a dramatic change in the way they were living their life? What was your reaction?
2. What have been some significant changes that you have made in your life? What were you trying to do by making that change? How was your decision received?
3. Have you ever encountered a profound experience of God's presence? Can you recall that experience, the situation, and the feelings you had at the time?
4. Imagine that you are there this morning watching Peter and his companions cleaning their nets, and you hear Jesus asking Peter to put out into some shallow water so that he can teach those gathered. What goes through your mind as you hear Jesus make his request?
5. After a time when Jesus is done speaking to the crowd, he once again turns to Peter and asks him to set out into the deep water and lower his nets. What happens within you as you hear this new request of Peter?
6. What comes to mind as you think of "the deep?"
7. Imagine the nets filled with fish to the point of almost breaking, and the boats being so full of fish that they are almost swamped. What does that scenario evoke for you?
8. Can you imagine yourself next to Peter on your knees before Jesus? What would you say?
9. Have you ever prayed in similar words to Peter's, "Get away from me, for I am sinful?"
10. Can you talk with God now honestly and frankly about whatever arose within you from this text?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fsc-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for February 6, 2022, the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a lofty throne. Seraphim were stationed above. They cried one to the other, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!" At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke. Then I said, "Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember that he had taken with tongs from the altar.

He touched my mouth with it, and said, "See, now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" "Here I am," I said; "send me!"

In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord, for you have heard the words of my mouth. I will worship at your holy temple and give thanks because of your kindness and your truth. You have made great your promise. When I called, you answered me; you built up strength within me. All the kings of the earth shall give thanks to you, O Lord, when they hear the words of your mouth; and they shall sing of the ways of the Lord: "Great is the glory of the Lord." Your right hand saves me. The Lord will complete what he has done for me; your kindness, O Lord, endures forever; forsake not the work of your hands.

I am reminding you, brothers and sisters, of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand. Through it you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. After that, Christ appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living. After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, he appeared to me. For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective. Indeed, I have toiled harder than all of them; not I, however, but the grace of God that is with me. Therefore, whether it be I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

The crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, while he was by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into Simon's boat, he asked him to put out a short distance. Then he taught from the boat. After he had finished, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said, "Master, we have worked all night and caught nothing, but at your command, I will." They caught so many fish their nets were tearing. They signaled to the other boat to come to help them. They filled both boats so that the boats were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." Astonishment at the catch of fish seized him and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

Excerpts from Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 138:1-8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; and Luke 5:1-11

From Joe:

Friends,

Here are the gospel background and reflection questions for February 6th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the Gospel from Luke, Jesus asks fishermen at the lakeshore to let him use their boat as a platform to teach the crowds from. Then he asks them to go out fishing, where they catch two boatsful, and then once ashore again he asks them to follow him. When the boats were filled to the point of sinking, Simon Peter fell at his knees and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." Jesus said, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men." They left everything and followed him.

The other readings also refer to people hearing the voice of God, having feelings of unworthiness in the presence of God and angels, and a calling and the response to the call. In the first reading, Isaiah feels he is doomed upon seeing the King, the Lord of Hosts. "Woe is me," he says. But an angel intervenes, and when the

Lord asks, "Whom shall I send," Isaiah replies, "Here I am, send me." Psalm 138 proclaims, "In the presence of the angels I will sing your praise, O Lord. You have heard the words of my mouth. When I called, you answered me." In the second reading, continuing from 1 Corinthians, Paul writes, "I am reminding you of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received. Christ died for our sins and was raised on the third day, in accordance with the scriptures. By the grace of God, we preach so you believe."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!