

## HOMILY SUNDAY 5-C

### “Discipleship: Call and Response”

(Is 6:1-2, 3-6; Psalm 138; 1 Co 15:1-11; Lk 5:1-11)

\*\*\*\*\*

A farmer had been so good to his animals that they wanted to do something special for him one day. A cow suggested that they give him breakfast in bed of ham and eggs. A chicken agreed and offered to lay the eggs. The pig objected, saying to the chicken, “For you, that’s one day’s work; for me, it would be total commitment!”

The responsible person seeks to make his or her whole life a response to the question and call of God. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1906-1945)

Respond to God’s call through faith, repentance and service.

The reality of a call by God and a response by individuals is a constant theme in the bible. The readings today present us with three calls, that of Isaiah, Paul and Peter. All felt unworthy, and all were healed and prepared in some way by God: Isaiah by a burning coal; Paul of course by blindness and a blessing from Ananias, and Peter by repentance and a commission from Jesus.

Peter’s call and response is noteworthy. He was attracted by the Word, that is, the power of Jesus’ teaching. Then Jesus suggests they cast their nets into the deep, and Peter obeys despite his previous failure to catch anything. The miraculous catch moves him to repentance, to change and conversion. Jesus then calls him to mission, to serve, to become just like Jesus

The miraculous catch of fish should probably be understood as a sign that as the Messiah anointed by the Spirit, Jesus did mighty works not unlike the works of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. This is the first miracle that was not a healing or an exorcism. Jesus does not command the sea or the fish, nor does he instruct the fishermen to do anything out of the ordinary. Like Moses, whom God used to supply water and manna in the wilderness, or Elijah who supplied an abundance of oil and meal, and Elisha, who supplied an endless supply of oil and fed a hundred people with twenty loaves of barley bread, Jesus provided an abundance of fish. The work of the kingdom, therefore, will be accompanied by signs of God’s gracious love. It will inaugurate a time of abundance and blessing.

In this passage, Jesus presents key teachings on discipleship. First, the fishermen had done nothing to earn Jesus’ call to them. They were not called because of their qualifications, character, or potential. God’s call is as unpredictable as it is unmerited. Second, the call to discipleship did not come in a holy place (the temple or synagogue) but in the midst of the fishermen’s daily work. This point is significant not because God does not call people in a holy place, but because it is a further sign of the work of God’s kingdom reaching into the area of human life. Third, the call to discipleship in Luke’s account does not include the familiar words “follow me,” as in Mark. Rather, Jesus commissions the fishermen for kingdom service: ‘catching people.’ Fourth, the metaphor of fishing suggests various facets of the disciple’s role in relation to Jesus and the kingdom. Henceforth they will live by Jesus’ teachings and call others to him just as they themselves have been called. Their work will be evangelistic in nature and infused with eschatological urgency. Finally, the call to the kingdom requires a reversal of priorities and a reordering of commitments. The disciples left

everything and they followed him. The language of following Jesus echoes Elijah's call to Elisha. The last word in Luke's story is Jesus. He will order their lives from now on.

By our baptism, God is calling us to follow Jesus, just as he called Peter and Paul. Undoubtedly, we will also feel unworthy, as did they. However, it is clear that God works through ordinary people. Imagine choosing a man with one leg to run through Canada for a cause, and yet that is what Terry Fox did, with amazing results. Like him, there is something in the world that only we can accomplish, and if we do not do it, it will not get done.

The same dynamics that applied to Peter and Paul will apply to us. We have heard the Word of God; we are moved to change and repentance, and then we are given a mission of service in the world to build up the reign of God. Let us respond to our call to follow Jesus through faith, repentance and service

My own call came at an early age as a kid growing up on a farm in rural Saskatchewan. It had its roots in the peace that I felt in the barn after chores; on a pile of wheat gazing at the stars in the sky during harvest. It was especially felt in the peace that filled the family car returning from mass on country roads, and the house after the family rosary. It was affirmed by people who either mentioned to me or my parents that I should be a priest. It was shocked into me by a French professor at university who asked me after class one day if I had ever thought of being a priest. And when I finally joined the Oblates after running away from this call for years, it was clinched by the peace I felt upon my arrival at the Oblate novitiate in Arnprior, Ontario. And the rest is history.

Your call may not be to priesthood nor to religious life, though some of you may be called to that. But rest assured, by baptism, we are all called to respond to God's love for us. Let us respond to that call through faith, repentance and service.

Here are some questions to ponder. Do you really believe in Jesus? What do you need to change to follow him more closely – what habit, sin, defect of character or negative attitude? How are you serving others in response?

The Eucharist that we celebrate today is really a renewal of that commitment. Jesus first nourishes us with his Word. Then he shares with us his Body and Blood, forming us into his Body, and sends us out to serve a broken world.

So, let us renew our baptismal call today, and follow Jesus through faith, repentance and service.