

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Luke 5:1-11

Two experienced fishermen decided one day to go ice fishing. They walked out on the frozen lake, cut a hole in the ice, put worms on their hooks, and lowered their lines into the water.

After about three hours they had caught nothing. Then a young boy walked by with some fishing gear. He cut a hole in the ice, put a worm on his hook, lowered the line into the water, and immediately pulled out a fish.

He repeated this process over and over until a pile of fish lay on the ice. The two fishermen were amazed. One of them walked over to the boy and said, “Young man, we have been sitting here for three hours and have caught nothing, and yet you in a few minutes have caught a dozen fish. What is your secret?”

The boy looked up and mumbled something that the man could not hear. The man noticed that there was a bulge in the boy’s cheek. So he said to him, “Young man, if you don’t mind, would you spit out that bubble gum so that you could speak clearly and I could understand you.”

The young boy cupped his hands and spit it out. Then he said, “It’s not bubble gum. It’s my secret. You need to keep the worms warm.”

When we see someone doing something that we cannot do, we presume there is a secret. We presume that they know something we do not know, that they have a talent we do not have.

Now this might be true about fishing, but it’s not true about being a disciple of Jesus. For we believe that when Christ calls us, he equips us at the same time. The call and the ability to accomplish the call are given together.

This is the experience we find throughout the scriptures. In today's first reading, Isaiah is called to be a prophet. He immediately knows that he is inadequate. He is not properly equipped. He is a sinful man. He wants the Lord to find someone else.

But the Lord does not find someone else. Instead, the Lord sends an angel to touch his lips, to forgive his sin, to equip him to be a prophet.

When Peter is called in today's gospel, he immediately sees that he lacks what is necessary. He is inadequate to the task. He tells Jesus, "Depart from me, Lord, I am a sinful man." Find someone else.

Jesus does not find someone else. Instead he says to Peter, "Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching people." Jesus equips Peter for what his calling will be. Both the call and the ability to accomplish the call are given together.

Now this is a very important truth because we are called in the same way that Peter was called. We were given faith not just for our benefit but for the benefit of others.

There is no such thing as private faith—faith just for me. To the extent that we believe, we believe not only for ourselves but to share what we believe with others.

We, like Peter, are called to catch people. Now this may cause some of us to be worried. We say, "I don't know how to share my faith." "I'm not good with words." "I don't like talking about religion or what I believe."

Fine and good, all of us have different gifts. But if we believe, we are called to share that belief. The God who we experience in our own life is not to be just kept within us. Our faith in God is to be shared with others.

How we share it can vary. Sharing our faith does not mean **imposing** our faith on others. It does not require that we stand on a soapbox in Public Square or that we stop people in the supermarket and ask them whether they have accepted Jesus as their personal savior.

That is one way to do it. But you can share your faith by using less words and more examples. You can share your faith by waiting for the right circumstances.

Here is where it is important to remember that the call and the ability to accomplish the call are both given together.

If you have been called to be a parent or a grandparent, you can be sure that God has equipped you to share your faith with your children.

Don't imagine that it is the responsibility of someone who works professionally in the church. Your call involves sharing what **you** believe, and God has equipped **you** to accomplish it. **You** can find your own way to tell your children, "This is what I believe". "This is how I pray." "I know God loves you."

Whenever we find ourselves dealing with a friend or someone at work who is in need or struggling with grief or loss, whenever we find ourselves called to reconcile with someone who has hurt us, that call is an invitation to share what we believe.

We should not be reluctant to include our faith in our approach to others. We can say to the person in need, "I believe that God is with you as you deal with this loss or this problem.

I will pray for you, because I know God loves you." We can say to the person with whom we seek reconciliation, "I come and ask for forgiveness not only because I believe it is right, but because I follow the teaching of Jesus."

We who have been called to believe are called to share that belief.

The call and the ability to accomplish the call come together.

There are no secrets, no things that some have and others do not have.

So the next time you find yourself with someone and you realize that that person's life could have more meaning and comfort if they knew of a God who loved them and cared for them.

Don't stand there and wait for God to send someone to proclaim that love. Don't stand there and wait for someone to share that good news. God has already sent someone. That someone is you.
AMEN.