

GOSPEL*Luke 5:1-11*

Jesus was standing one day by the lake of Gennesaret, with the crowd pressing round him listening to the word of God, when he caught sight of two boats close to the bank. The fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats – it was Simon's – and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

When he had finished speaking he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch.' 'Master,' Simon replied 'we worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.' And when they had done this they netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear, so they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them; when these came, they filled the two boats to sinking point.

When Simon Peter saw this he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Leave me Lord; I am a sinful man.' For he and all his companions were completely overcome by the catch they had made; so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. But Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on it is men you will catch.' Then, bringing their boats back to land, they left everything and followed him.

REFLECTION BY POPE BENEDICT XVI*7 February, 2010*

The Liturgy on this Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time presents us with the subject of the divine call. In a majestic vision Isaiah finds himself in the presence of the thrice-blessed Lord and is overcome by great awe and a profound feeling of his unworthiness. But a seraph purifies his lips with a burning coal and wipes away his sin. Feeling ready to respond to God's call, he exclaims: "Here I am, Lord. Command me!" (cf. Is 6:1-2; 3-8). The same succession of sentiments is presented in the episode of the miraculous catch of which today's Gospel passage speaks. Asked by Jesus to cast their nets although they had caught nothing during the night, trusting in his word, Simon Peter and the other disciples obtain a superabundant catch. In the face of this miracle Simon Peter does

not throw his arms around Jesus to express his joy at the unexpected catch. Rather, as the Evangelist Luke recounts, he falls to his knees saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man O Lord". Jesus, therefore, reassures him: "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men" (cf. Lk 5:10); and leaving everything, he followed him.

Paul too, remembering that he had been a persecutor of the Church, professed himself unworthy to be called an apostle. Yet he recognized that the grace of God had worked wonders in him and, despite his limitations, God had entrusted him with the task and honour of preaching the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor 15:8-10). In these three experiences, we see how an authentic encounter with God brings the human being to recognize his poverty and inadequacy, his limitations and his sins. Yet in spite of this weakness the Lord, rich in mercy and forgiveness, transforms the life of human beings and calls them to follow him. The humility shown by Isaiah, Peter and Paul invites all who have received the gift of a divine vocation not to focus on their own limitations but rather to keep their gaze fixed on the Lord and on his amazing mercy so that their hearts may be converted and that they may continue joyfully, "to leave everything" to him. Indeed, the Lord does not look at what is important to human beings. "The Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Sam 16:7) and makes human beings who are poor and weak but have faith in him fearless apostles and heralds of salvation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: Why is keeping our gaze fixed on the Lord, rather than our own limitations, so difficult at times? Why is it important?



Heart: If Jesus were standing before you and asked you to leave everything and follow him, what would your response be? Why?



Hands: How can we learn to distinguish between true weakness (tendency to sin or turn from God) and false weakness (negative thoughts about ourselves)? Why do you think this might be important?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be.’