

5th Sunday Ordinary Time Year "C" *They left everything and followed Jesus.*

Readings: Isaiah 6:1-8; 1 Cor. 15:1-11; Luke 5: 1-11

February 9-10, 2019

No matter how many times we see the aftermath of scenes of devastation following natural disasters, it is almost impossible to imagine the emotions that must overcome the people who experienced them first hand. Some have literally lost everything that they own materially speaking and have seen personal treasures washed away or burned to ashes. We saw this with the California fires last year that affected nearly 2 million acres or Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.

Yet, I have been most edified by how people remarked that on account of the safety of their families, their house and possessions were utterly unimportant in the light of the safety of their families. "We will rebuild, we will survive." It is difficult to fathom suddenly losing everything. In our Gospel today, while the apostles did not lose everything, they did leave it all behind. Again, how could they abandon their jobs, their livelihoods to follow Jesus? What was the cost?

When I began college, I was already thinking about the seminary but was hesitant to sign on the dotted line. It simply seemed too risky. After a few months of my Freshman year, I knew I needed to give it a try. More than thirty-seven years later, I see it as the first major decision of my life; no one could make it for me.

I dropped out of pre-Med a year later, declaring a Philosophy major, much to the chagrin of my advisor. "Do not throw away this chance, are you certain you want to close this door? I have a hard time seeing you as a priest." Would I make a stand or to retreat into uncertainty? "*Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.*" Even when we are unsure, we put into deep water and trust that the Lord will provide for the catch.

**It was the most freedom I had ever felt;** this was my decision. I have never regretted that decision, even in the darkest of days or circumstances.

God leads each of us in our lives, whatever our vocation or career path or career change. He leads us along the right path. The Sacraments of Initiation “ground the common vocation of all Christ’s disciples, a vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world. They confer graces needed for the life according to the Spirit during this life as pilgrims on the march towards the homeland.”<sup>1</sup>

*Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.*

The apostles had every reason to fear; abandoning the familiar, setting off on a journey for which humanly speaking they could not possibly have been prepared. They had many difficulties and more than a few doubts. But their journey had one key difference; they had the promise of God’s grace leading them; they did not rely solely on their own strength.

The end of today’s second reading is a scriptural example of a creed. “So we preached and so you believed.” Later, the Church gathered at the first Ecumenical Council Nicea to formulate the very Creed we recite each Sunday. Yet, the earliest credal statements were biblical.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the people gave voice to their beliefs so that future generations might know and hold fast to the saving truths of Christ. We cling to our core beliefs, knowing that they sustain us in the midst of all the challenges we encounter. If the world tempts us to abandon our core beliefs, we must re-commit ourselves.

*They left everything and followed Jesus.*

Isaiah answered the call of the Lord unhesitatingly. “Here I am, send me!” He followed the Lord, not likely comprehending what lay ahead. But in so doing, he made an act of faith and trust in God. That trust is

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<sup>1</sup> (Catechism of the Catholic Church, para # 1533)

repaid many times over; God's grace to us is effective if we but cling to that which we believe, not so much a set of propositions, as He himself who is our light and our salvation.

Our beliefs have tremendous consequences for our whole life. Our faith is not primarily relegated to Sundays. Rather, it informs all that we say and do. It gives us the courage to answer the call to our vocation in life, to leave behind that which we do not need.

I close with the comforting words of St. Teresa of Avila, whose prayer of trust should serve as a model for all of us:

Let nothing trouble you/Let nothing frighten you  
Everything passes/God never changes  
Patience/ Obtains all  
Whoever has God/Wants for nothing  
God alone is enough.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, *Poesias* # 30 in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. III)