

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 5-6, 2022

This past week, an entire community gathered in hopes of a miracle. A five-year-old boy named Rayan Awram had fallen into a 100-foot well in a Moroccan village. The four-day rescue operation transfixed a nation, and even beyond. Sadly, the valiant effort failed to save the life Rayan. The New York Times quoted a 32-year-old doctor in the Moroccan city of Pez who said: "As a country, we needed a bit of hope, and even though the ending was tragic, it did bring us all together. May he rest in peace."

Photos show hundreds of townspeople gathered on a hillside. At one point 100,000 were watching on livestream. Daily life stopped; everyone was pulling for the little boy. My prayer is that this family, surrounded by love and hope, will derive some solace, even when all seems lost. It serves as a stark reminder of what is most important in life. This entire village set an example of how we respond to lift one another in time of need.

In today's Gospel, an entire village turned out, pressing in on Jesus to listen to him. While the apostles neither experienced tragedy, nor lost everything, they did however leave it all behind. They abandoned their livelihoods and family, all to follow Jesus. And there was significant cost.

Before I began college, I had been thinking about the seminary, though was hesitant to sign on the dotted line. It simply felt too risky for me. By October of my Freshman year, I began the application process, entering forty years ago last month. In retrospect, it was the first major decision that I had made in my life- no one could make it for me. But I remained in Pre-Med, hedging my bets, biding my time.

Ultimately, I switched out of Biology in the Spring of my sophomore year and declared a Philosophy major, much to the chagrin of my pre-Med 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!"

*“Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.”*

It was time to make a stand, or to retreat into uncertainty. Sometimes we put into deep water, trusting that the Lord will provide for the catch. **It was the most freedom I had ever experienced**, and I needed to trust that where I heard God leading me in prayer was authentic. I have never regretted that decision, even during the most difficult of days.

God leads each of us on the path. For those discerning a call to priesthood or religious life, contemplating marriage, or pondering a career change- in all cases, God 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 human reason to fear; they abandoned what was known and set off on a journey for which they could not possibly have been prepared humanly speaking. They had many difficulties and perhaps 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 earliest creedal statements were biblical. Our reading from Saint Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians is an example. “So we preached and so you believe,” Paul reminds us in our second reading. Later through the gift of Sacred Tradition, the Church gathered in Council at Nicaea and formulate the very Creed we recite each Sunday. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the people articulated their beliefs so that future generations might know and hold fast to the saving truths of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph # 1533.

Our core beliefs sustain us amid all the challenges we encounter, enabling us to reach out to others, both in times of plenty and in times of pain.

*They left everything and followed Jesus.*

Isaiah answered the call of the Lord unhesitatingly. “Here I am, send me!” He had followed the Lord, unlikely to have comprehended what lay ahead. But in so doing, he made an act of faith and trust in God. That trust is 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 faith cannot primarily be 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 Jesus, Poesias 30 in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. III, tr. K. Kavanaugh OCD and O. Rodriguez OCD (Washington DC Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1985), 386 no. 9. tr. John Wall.