

Homily for the 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 9-10, 2019

Readings: Isaiah 6:1-2A, 3-8; 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11; Luke 5: 1-11

Preacher: Gaynelle Wethers

Luke's gospel message struck home to me because I come from a fishing family. Fishing requires dedication, special equipment, and knowledge of weather and understanding of the water where schools of fish can be found.

So when Jesus tells Simon to "Put out into the deep water, and let down the nets for a catch," Simon knew, as an experienced fisherman, that this would not yield anything because he and the other fishermen had been at this all night with no luck. And the fishermen had been communicating with each other that their particular spots on the lake were not yielding the catch they so desired. Who is this person telling us to do this when we've tried and it doesn't work?

Doesn't this sound familiar? When a new person comes into a situation and introduces an idea, the response often is, "this is the way we have always done it" or "we tried that once and it didn't work."

The talk around the "water cooler" starts with, "Who is this person? We work hard enough already, why are they demanding more work for us to do?" Think about where would Blockbuster be today had the company accepted the request from Netflix to merge?

More importantly, how do we respond to God's call to change or move into a new direction? Is our hesitancy due to our feelings of inadequacy? Does our insecurity lead us to conclude that we lack the resources to complete the required task? Do we ever take a moment to say to ourselves, "This is an opportunity to grow, develop and expand my network of friends with different skill sets for support in this endeavor?"

In Simon's case, tired as he was, hesitant as he was, he listened. And "he let down his nets." This resulted in a "large number of fish, so much so that the filled boats began to sink."

Has something similar ever happened to you? Have you exceeded your expectations when you took the leap of faith?

This commissioning of Simon Peter by Jesus to be the “fisher of men,” to build God’s church, was a miracle. Do we still believe in miracles—that something or someone ordinary produce an extraordinary result or one that exceeds our expectation? As leaders, we must be like Simon Peter. Hesitant as we are, we must look to others who have the skill sets in the areas we need to move us forward—in other words, to “set the nets down to receive favors beyond our expectations.”

We must be like Harriet Tubman who let her net down and freed a thousand slaves.

We must be like Ida B. Wells who exposed lynching as a barbaric practice of the south to instill fear and intimidate blacks.

We must be like Sojourner Truth, who said, God called her to leave the city to go to the countryside, “testifying to the hope that was in her.”

We must ask ourselves, where is God asking you to cast you net down?