

## Epiphany 5 Luke 5:1-11

In today's gospel lesson, four ordinary men have an encounter with Jesus which will transform their lives and form the basis of the first group of Christian disciples. Jesus is beginning his public ministry, and he came into Galilee and passing along by the Sea of Galilee he called these fishermen to become fishers of people.

The text says, "he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you become fishers of people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him." Can you feel the urgency, the immediacy, the conviction, of these men?

When Jesus called these fishermen the story could have had a vastly different course. They could have scratched their heads and discussed the pros and cons with each other, their families and neighbours. They could have told Jesus, well, let us think about it for a while, maybe something even better will come along. Maybe a big school of fish will come and we will not be able to leave, maybe our wives won't let us, maybe our friends will make fun of us for leaving our jobs, our home and our families to follow a guy who we barely even know. They could have said no thank you!

But when Jesus called these fishermen there was none of the above, they didn't question his call, they didn't think about it, they didn't consult their families, they didn't see if anything better would come along, they followed him. We can only conclude that there was something special, something different about such an encounter with Jesus that one doesn't get with an encounter with anyone else.

But although we do not have the physical Jesus here to call us, when Jesus through his Holy Spirit encounters us today to follow him and let him be the Lord of our lives our response should be the same, he doesn't want us to think about it, to weigh it, to study the pros and cons, to talk to our family and friends, to wait and see if something better will come along, or the situation in which we find ourselves will improve. When Jesus calls us there is a sense of urgency, there is a sense that Jesus is erupting into our lives with such a strong force that we have no choice but to decide now, not tomorrow or the next day, but now, now while he encounters us; while his presence is with us, while we have him besides us to encourage us in our decision.

When Jesus calls us, when he encounters us, he does so with a sense of urgency, with a sense of immediacy, with a sense of conviction, with a sense of commitment, with a sense that we will turn our entire lives over to him. Then notice what he said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people."

Having been fishermen, these men knew what Jesus was talking about. In order to become fishers of people, they would go out, find and bring back others for Jesus, just like they did with fish. They may not have known then what that would look like, but we do now, with the scriptural record. They would catch others with the gospel message of repentance and forgiveness that Jesus was proclaiming. They would share with others the good news that Jesus was sharing with them, Not only does Jesus call us to a life of urgency and conviction, but he calls us to a task, he calls us to a job, he calls us to do something with what he has given us. He calls us to share; he calls us to give to others what he has first given to us, his love, his caring, and his forgiveness.

There is an old Korean legend that goes like this: a devout and generous man died and before he allowed St. Peter to usher him through the pearly gates he requested that he first

take one small peek at hell. At the gateway of hell he was astounded to see long tables, food laden and sumptuous. In poured the multitudes gaunt, ghastly, starved apparently into skeletons. Fastened to the forearm of each were yard-long forks and spoons. They frantically fought to feed themselves, in vain. Back in heaven he beheld tables that were identically laden, but when the heavenly host came in, although to each arm was fastened a yard-long fork and spoon, just like in hell, they sat down and began to feed each other. The new resident knew it was heaven all right what with all that sharing.

It is a fundamental call for a Christian to be one who shares with another. The fruits of the Spirit by which we will be known includes love, kindness and generosity. Sharing is a sign that marks the life of a follower of Jesus. Sharing our faith, sharing our resources, sharing a part of ourselves with others is what this life is all about as we follow Christ. Jesus calls us to a life of conviction, to a life of urgency, to a life of sharing, to a live of proclaiming good news to others. But you might wonder, who do we share this story with, who are the ones that we tell about Jesus and how might go about telling them?

It was to St Francis that the saying is attributed, "preach the Gospel always and where necessary use words". The message we are to take from the evangelism of Jesus and indeed of those first disciples, is that the Gospel is not something to be offered by logic, but rather it is to be exemplified by living. The first disciples preached good news to those around them by having the courage of their convictions and stepping away from secure lives to follow the one who stirred their spirits within them. We share the Gospel in the words and actions we perform which let others know they are loved and valued, those things which display the fruits of the Spirit by which we will be known. There is no action or encounter, offered in love, which is too small or insignificant to count in the eyes of God.

Jesus calls us to love the ones in this world that nobody else will love. Jesus calls us to reach out to the lonely, to the hungry, to the sick, to the ones in prison, to the disabled, to the forsaken, to the needy, to all of those people who need to hear that someone indeed does love them and that someone is Jesus Christ. Jesus came into Galilee preaching the good news that the kingdom of God was at hand. That message of good news shook men and women out of their ordinary lives and led them to do extraordinary things. Jesus asks us all to go into the world with that same message, the message of the good news of God and that God's kingdom is now it is at hand. Jesus calls us to a life of conviction, to a life of urgency, to a live of reaching out with his message of love and forgiveness to all the people we encounter. May we each have the confidence of those first disciples to trust in Jesus as we answer our call.