



## CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

*Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation*

February 7, 2016

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### **Gospel reading Luke 5:1-11**     *[To be read aloud]*

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that the boats were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

### **Brief commentary:**

As we come to the conclusion of this first and shorter part of Ordinary Time, and prepare for the beginning of Lent, the theme of Ordinary Time is powerfully stressed, the theme of discipleship. All of our readings today speak to us about God's call and our response to mission. And each story of call and response share important characteristics. In each case, whether that of the call of Isaiah, of Paul or of Peter and the disciples, God initiates an experience of grace that offers people a breakthrough, a broader horizon, and a new mission. Hearing God's voice and experiencing the goodness of God in each case leads the one called to humbly realize their frailty and their sinfulness. In each case God frees them from their feelings of inadequacy, assures them that they have been particularly chosen for a mission, and that they will be empowered by God himself to be able to fulfill their mission. In each case they respond with confidence and boldness: Isaiah exclaims "Here I am, send me!" Peter and the disciples left behind their very livelihood joining Jesus in his mission, and Paul would become the most intrepid of all the apostles after being called by the risen Lord. Discipleship begins with the experience of divine grace reaching out to us, calling us, assuring and empowering us; and it response... confident and resolute response. It doesn't focus on frailties and sins, but on God's power and grace. In today's gospel passage, Simon Peter and his companions had little to show for their many fishing efforts, but were at least willing to take the risk that Jesus presents to them to "go out again... into the deep." Nothing in their experience would have compelled them to think that this was going to meet with success; instead, they do something essential... they trust Jesus and in faith do as he instructs them. "Astonished" by the remarkable catch of fish they realize that Jesus is different: God is working through him. Peter's realization of this leads an acute awareness of his unworthiness, but Jesus assures him 'not to fear' for "from now on you will be catching people instead." It has often been said that 'God does not necessarily call the qualified, but rather qualifies the called'. Christians know that the Spirit of the Lord anoints us for mission 'in and for' the world, a mission that is none other than the expression of God's own saving presence and action in the world. As we prepare for Lent, we know that discipleship involves "denying oneself, taking up our cross and following Jesus." Just as Isaiah, Peter and the disciples, and Paul – as well as innumerable Christians throughout history – have left behind what limits them in response to the liberating and empowering grace of God to be Jesus' apostles in the world, so we too have heard his call, felt his grace, and respond with the boldness of faith.

### **Today's reading offers significant messages:**

- The theme of discipleship, what it means to listen to the voice of God in Jesus Christ and to respond in faith, is emphasized in the last readings of the first period of Ordinary Time.
- God initiates our life of faith, calling us by name, assuring us of his grace and help. Faith is a gift of divine grace. Faith is also a free human response involving leaving behind what distances us from God and boldly following Jesus Christ.
- Like Isaiah, Peter and Paul, Christians are empowered by the Spirit of the Lord for the mission of being Christ's apostles in and for the world. Christians can live and share the Gospel with confidence, authenticity and conviction.

### **For our shared or personal reflection:**

*After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.*

- How have I heard God's voice and experienced God's grace calling out to me?
- How have I responded, and how am I responding, to Jesus' call to follow him?
- What is my mission as an apostle of Jesus, as a member of his Church?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 144-84