

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
(Isaiah 6:1-2. 3-8 / Luke 5:1-11)
10.02.2019
Discipleship

Dear brothers and sisters,

There are two ways to deal with our lives.

One way is to go it alone, “to do it our way”. By this I mean that we wrongly think that we are in charge, that we are in control of our lives. We know what to do and where to go. We count on our own intelligence, our own skills, and our obvious talents. We rely on our own strength, on the strength of our wrist, and where necessary even on the strength of our fist! When we live in this perspective, life is about “I, me and myself”!

The other way to deal with our lives is to rely on God’s help. We recognize that we are short-sighted and do not see the full picture. We admit that there are blind spots in our field of vision. For this reason, we recognize that we need God’s help. We grasp that we need to learn to walk the path of life with the Lord. We need to follow Christ and allow Him to take the lead and guide us. This way of dealing with our lives is the way of discipleship. Our vocation in life, rooted in our baptism, is to be a disciple of Christ.

Today’s gospel passage ends with these words: “The disciples left everything and followed Jesus”. If we want to follow Christ we have to leave everything and first of all ourselves. We have to leave behind our false securities, our possessions of every kind, and our own ideas which are so often only partial, because we are so short-sighted. We have to allow ourselves to be set free from all our ideologies. When we live this way, the centre of our lives is no longer ourselves alone, but ourselves with Christ! We follow Christ’s desire and not our own will alone. We imitate the disciples who left everything and followed Jesus.

The first reading we heard this morning -the narrative of the vocation of the prophet Isaiah- ends with these words: “Here I am, Lord, send me”. Isaiah knew that he was a sinner; he knew that he was in a wretched state, that he was lost, and that his lips were unclean; and yet he consented to be sent by God; he consented to allow God to work with him and through him... using even his weaknesses.

We are disciples of Christ. We have human skills – skills which are very often well recognized by all those around us – and with these skills we can do so much! But with God’s help we can do so much more! There are some things that we can do only with God’s help!

There is no doubt that Jesus’ disciples were experienced fishermen. They knew that fish are more likely to be caught after dark. In the past, they had tried to fish by daylight and had caught nothing. On the other hand they knew that to fish during the night would lead to a plentiful catch... This had been their experience so many times, and yet, in today’s gospel passage, these men had worked the whole night long to no avail. Enlightened by their own wisdom, the last

thing they would do in normal circumstances would be to start fishing again during daylight. But they listened to the voice of the Lord and they obeyed him. The result was a huge catch.

As we try to follow Christ, it happens that the Lord requires from us to consent to something which seems to us to be pointless, a waste of time and effort. Our experience and our skill tell us that it will not work. We grumble as we do it, and suddenly everything clicks into place: we reap a huge catch, we have a success we would never have dreamt possible. This is really to follow Christ and not ourselves alone! I realize that it is easy to say what I am saying but it is harder to live it. When situations such as I have just described arise, it is not so easy to consent to God's will. In our foolishness, we may think that we know best!

To follow Christ also requires from us to be somewhat creative and inventive. In today's gospel passage, we see that Jesus had begun to talk a group by the lake shore, but the crowd got bigger and bigger and the people could not hear him. So, Jesus improvised. The place where he found himself formed a natural amphitheatre on the lake shore. So Jesus got the idea of sitting in one of the fishing boats which were there and pushed out a little from the shore. There He was able to talk naturally, without effort, and everyone seated in the natural amphitheatre could hear him clearly because his voice carried across the water.

As we try to follow Christ, we have to imitate him and become inventive in the situation in which we find ourselves. In the present context, the Church faces the huge challenge to move from "a pyramidal Church" to a "synodal Church". In the old model of the pyramidal Church, everything came from the top – Rome, the bishops and the clergy – and the laity were there just to obey. In a synodal Church, baptism is the common denominator for all: both laity and hierarchy. Together – with Christ – we form the people of God. The hierarchy is part of the people of God with a special mission: the mission to serve and keep the community united. The move which is asked of us from a pyramidal Church to a synodal Church is simply the implementation of the Second Vatican Council. We are called to a huge shift of perspective. We have to change our positions if we want to be faithful to our vocation as Christian disciples. We have to be creative and become inventive. There is still a lot to be done, much to be invented if we really want to become a synodal Church, a Church in which we all walk and work together with Christ.

Let us ask the Lord for a fresh out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church, upon each one of us, so that we may learn to leave everything behind and follow Jesus in the new way he bids us follow which is in fact none other than the way of the gospel.