

Homily. 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.C. 9/10 February 2019.

My experience is that there aren't booming voices from heaven or startling visions when God calls, but please do let me know if either of these things, or something very like them, happens to you. No, as a rule, God calls us through our thoughts and feelings, the impulses of our heart's and the convictions that are born from our souls, our inmost self. In this way God's call is much like loving. It arises from a spark, a weak wavering flame, into a consuming fire. It's fed by our contacts and relationships with other people and with God. Then one day, as if from nowhere, we are jolted into the realisation that we're in love, that we're called to move forwards in ways that we hadn't with logic and reason alone foreseen.

Simon, who became the Apostle Peter, along with his fishermen friends and partners, had already met Jesus when He'd visited, preached and healed in their Lakeside town of Capernaum. In fact, one of the people Jesus healed during that first visit was Simon's mother in law, who then went on to provide them meal. After this visit, St. Luke tells us that Jesus moved on, doing the same work in other towns and villages around Galilee and Judaea. We're not sure how long Jesus was ministering like this, all by Himself without disciples, but at some point He'd returned to Galilee and the village of Capernaum, which is where the gospel of this weekend picks us up. What we do know is that this time Jesus was out fishing for followers, for companions, for a team willing to learn from and work with Him in sharing the Good-News of God.

It was to the fishermen He'd met, helped, eaten and stayed with on His earlier Capernaum visit that Jesus turned. They knew Him, they'd heard His words and seen His work so they didn't hesitate in providing their boat as a floating platform for His preaching. Knowing that they'd had no luck fishing all that night long, Jesus asked Simon to go out into deep water and have another go. Now, Simon was the expert in this fishing game, the head of the small business upon which he and the others relied for their living, so he reasonably expressed his doubts about what Jesus the preacher suggested. It was only with the experience of two boats filled with fish to sinking point that Simon came to grasp that he was meeting someone greater than himself, someone irresistible, someone from God. The new leaf was turned over in the life of Simon Peter and his companions, so much so that they left everything and everyone else behind following Jesus steps from that moment onwards.

Isaiah did have visions of the heavenly court and throne of God and Saul, who became Paul, was struck blind by the light, hearing voice of Jesus on the Damascus Road, so I admit that God can act just as God wishes. Mainly though, and for most of us, God calls us like Jesus did to the fishermen of Galilee, by getting us to gradually know Him and what He wants of us and for us. As I said earlier, it's like loving. Some fall in love at first sight but most of us grow into loving someone over time through all sorts of experiences before we commit to them forever. Whatever way it happens, what matters is that it does happen and that can only be so if we're open and listening attentively to the call however it comes, desiring to hear God's invitation to fellowship and hope in Christ.

The last important thing that matters is that we all commit to working together as one like a boat full of good fishermen and women in the service of the truth. After all, that's why Jesus called fishermen first not bounty hunters. They understood very well that going it alone was no lasting way to catch anything, let alone anyone.