

5th Sunday
2/6/2022

A FOUR-STEP PROCESS

Where my family went swimming when I was young there were three pools: a shallow kiddie pool, the regular pool and then the deep water pool where the diving boards were.

So often in the Bible when there is a call from God, you find a four-step process of a call or at least an experience and then a protest. What then follows is a reassurance and then a decision. Call, protest, reassurance, decision. This was the experience of Isaiah. The brighter the light, the more dirt you can see but God reveals the light not for us to remain unclean but that we might be transformed. A couple of centuries after Isaiah, the prophet Jeremiah had a similar experience and we heard part of that story last week.

We see this repeated again in today's Gospel. There's Peter. In this bright light of Christ, he sees his own sinfulness, his own dirt but the brighter the light, the more dirt you can see but God reveals the light not for us to remain unclean but that we might be transformed. And Peter followed. Peter, who certainly had a strong personality, showed faith in Jesus' instruction, despite being a professional fisherman, he let down his nets at Jesus' words. Even before he realized who Jesus was, he showed some faith in Jesus.

Jesus as he so often does, says to not be afraid and that now he will be catching people. That's an odd expression. A fisherman makes his living by taking the life of fish. The word that Jesus uses to catch doesn't mean to take life but giving and sustaining life. Peter's isn't to take the life of people the way he took the life of fish. He is to serve people as a disciple and apostle of Jesus. Peter stepped out in faith, in deep faith.

In the second reading, Paul tells his own experience of the transcendent, his sinfulness and his response, a yes that lasted the rest of his life.

There's a phrase in this gospel both simple and profound: *put out into deep water*. To put out for deep water has a geographical and spiritual meaning. It can be easy to stay in the kiddie pool of faith but Jesus calls us to lives of deeper prayer, faith, discipleship and ultimately the depths of love. He calls us away from complacency, mediocrity & half-hearted attempts to follow him, It's easy to fall into a minimalist ethic and a shallow expression of faith. Jesus calls out of the kiddie pool of faith trying to take things on our own terms. He calls us to entrust ourselves to the mystery of faith.

We can go through a process of a call, a protest, a reassurance and then there is a decision we have to make. But we don't do this by ourselves we do it as members of the Body of Christ that we call the Church. We do it strengthened by prayer, informed by the word of God, fortified by the sacraments and nourished by the Eucharist. We set out for those deep waters together.

It's easier to stay in the shallow waters but Jesus always calls us to something deeper, something richer, something higher and something better. It's a personal decision but something we do together. Peter said yes and then ended up, tradition tells us, in Rome being crucified, upside and but I think he was OK with that. Something similar happened to St. Paul who was beheaded outside the walls Rome and I think he was OK with that. With lives of intentional faith, let us put out into the big, mysterious, unknown, scary and beautiful waters of following Jesus.