

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—2023

Jim had an awful day fishing on the lake, sitting in the blazing sun all day without catching a single one. On his way home, he stopped at the supermarket and ordered four catfish. He told the fish salesman, "Pick four large ones out and throw them at me, will you?" "Why do you want me to throw them at you?" ask the salesman. Jim said, "Because I want to tell my wife that I caught them." "Okay," said the salesman, " but I suggest that you take the haddock." "But why?" asked Jim. "Because your wife came in earlier today and said that if you came by, I should tell you to take haddock. She prefers that over catfish."

One of the expressions that we hear from time to time comes to us from world of fishing, and that is to take something someone says "Hook, line and sinker." In the Gospel today, we see an example of a few people taking what Jesus says, "Hook, line and sinker." Those first disciples literally left nets, their boats, and their father when Jesus invited them to follow him. They left it all behind. They took the risk and put their faith in this Jesus who they had probably been around for a little while. They had seen Jesus and probably even heard what he was saying; maybe they even saw a miracle or two. In any case, they took the next step and moved beyond a simple fascination to a real commitment, not knowing exactly what it would entail.

As the Gospel progresses, we see that the first disciples had to grow into what Jesus was asking of them. In the beginning there were probably a number of things that Jesus did and said that shocked them; things they couldn't understand or accept completely, but, in spite of that, they were willing to put their trust in Jesus. We also know that to follow Jesus would cost them and not always be easy or uplifting; at times it would cause them pain and suffering. But we know that Jesus never hid that aspect from them. However, out their willingness to sacrifice and their willingness to grow and leave behind their selfishness and self-centeredness, they would come to a peace and joy that they would never have been able to experience without their commitment to Jesus.

Their leaving behind their nets and their boats becomes a symbol for leaving behind all those negative and unloving things, those attitudes, those prejudices, jealousies, resentments, or whatever got in between them and Jesus and all those other people who would eventually answer Jesus' call to follow him.

Their following Jesus would take them into uncharted territory, sometimes with nothing but their faith in Jesus and their companionship with their fellow disciples. It's easy to see how we can apply this to ourselves and the fact that Jesus calls to each one of us to follow him as he called those first disciples. He calls us now beyond a simple fascination or spectatorship to a real discipleship that touches the very core of our lives and the way we live our everyday lives. And,

to go back to that expression, he wants to take what he says, “Hook, line and sinker” and leave behind what holds us back from following him as he wants us to. Those holds for us individually and together as members of this Faith Community and the whole Church.

If we don't embrace our calling wholeheartedly, then we will never really be able to experience that real joy, peace and contentment that will always be there in the most trying of times. We won't be able to bring about any real or lasting changes in our own lives and the impact that we have on others will be minimal. What does it mean to embrace our calling wholeheartedly? It means that in whatever life situation we find ourselves, we are aware of God's presence and we allow it to guide us and direct. It means that the Gospel values are now our values. As I shared with you last week it means that we are aware of our identity as God's children and that we act that way. Each of us and together, try to give witness to God's care and concern for others by the care and concern we show to other in our everyday lives and everyday dealings; we help others come to see and appreciate their dignity as a beloved son or daughter by treating them as a beloved brother or sister.

Today, we remember that as Jesus called the first disciples he continues to call us in the same way; he calls us not because we are holy, but calls us to recognize our need for him and one another and to never forget our roots. He calls us to be fishers of people, inviting them to be part of God's family. Hopefully by our enthusiasm they will want to be a part of something very special. To remember this, to work together, to see that we need one another is what will insure our continued growth as we today say *Yes* to Jesus who calls us to follow him. And especially in these days, may we, individually and together, be open to the guidance of the God's Holy Spirit as we begin our journey on the Road to Renewal.