



Homily for
FIFTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME
6/7 February, 2016

Fr. Dwayne's homily follows....

I. As you know, before the Iowa Caucus we get the opportunity to have a direct encounter with presidential candidates. We receive mailings, phone messages, a barrage of TV ads and, most importantly, we can go to events where we can actually meet a candidate, or at least see them up close.

As I have watched all of this unfold in recent weeks, I've found myself asking why would anyone put themselves through this? What drives them? How is it humanly possible to meet with groups – two, three, four groups – day after day day – for months?! Large groups, small groups, all ages – sometimes hostile people. How do they do this?

It has to be more than just vanity – more than just “wanting to be president,” more than being famous and getting one's name in the history books. There has to be something deeper that drives them. There have to be issues which have captured their heart, things for which they have developed a deep passion. At some moment there was a tipping point – when they went from not wanting to

be president to stepping out and putting their name and face out there.

While there may be a mix of motives, I don't think it is a stretch to say that in some way this is a kind of call: they feel "called" to express their ideas and share their vision for the country.

II. We see this kind of dramatic change and commitment happening in each of our scripture readings today:

- the first reading is Isaiah's call – a powerful and even terrifying call while Isaiah is praying in the Temple. The frame of the door shakes and the room is filled with smoke! Isaiah is purified of his sin and then he responds, "Here I am, send me!"
- Paul refers back to his call when he went from being a persecutor of the Church to being one of its strongest advocates. He calls himself an apostle, even though he was not one of the original twelve. Paul boldly proclaims the gospel message.
- the central figure of the gospel is Peter who was humbled in the presence of Jesus. The astonishing catch of fish took Peter to another level of commitment to follow Jesus: so much so that he left everything to follow Jesus.

Each one felt a dramatic change in his heart and each responded, in his own time and way, to the invitation Jesus extended to Peter in the gospel: Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.

III. But most of us do not experience God's call with a minor earthquake and smoke rising in church while we pray. Most of us do not have a complete 180 change in our life direction like St. Paul – any more than most of us feel a call to be president of the United States.

Most of us experience God's call when we are cleaning our fishing nets.

Picture in your mind Peter and his buddies: they're along the shore cleaning their nets after a long night of fishing.

- they're probably disgusted they didn't catch anything
- they're cleaning their nets and inspecting them for any tears
- they're probably thinking about getting some rest and hoping the next time they go out they will catch something
- and they certainly weren't thinking about encountering God

And then it happened.

Imagine the astonishing catch of fish – how *electrifying* that must have been!

And then it dawns on Peter – there is something more going on here than just a lucky catch of fish.

IV. The encounter with God happens for us in the ordinary things of life. It can happen in the joyful moments: a child's birthday party...grand children bursting into the house...a surprise job promotion...spending time with a best friend – but perhaps we should be most aware of God's call in the challenges of life....

- when a parent is trying to deal with a difficult child
- when a teenager is frustrated trying to understand a parent's wishes
- when we have to start giving up those things we used to do so easily
- when a co-worker was harsh and unkind towards us
- when a college student far from home is distracted by home sickness
- when it's just one of those days when nothing seems to go right
- when we must watch a loved one enter into the dying process
- when it becomes increasingly difficult to be patient with aging parents

It is in these moments when we should prompt ourselves to listen...to lean

in and listen:

- what do I do with this, Lord?
- how do you want me to respond?
- how can I be bigger than this frustration?

- just like Peter who was aware of his frustration but said anyway, “Ok, Lord,

I will do it.”

V. Those are moments of call – when we are called to something more – when we become in some sense a “fisher of others, of men and women” – when we can witness to others maturity – patience – kindness – gentleness – mercy – or any of a host of virtues.

Each of us is called – always called to go deeper – to take one more step – not in big flashy ways – but in the nit ‘n gritty of daily life.

How will you and I be called this week?

How will we be called today?

Fr. Kyle’s homily follows....

Lent starts on Wednesday. Do you know what you are giving up? Truth be told I don’t know for sure what I am giving up so I better get my act together.

Today's gospel reading is packed full of stuff so I could probably preach to you guys until the Super Bowl starts. But I'm not going to. I would like to focus on three things that can help us prepare for the beginning of the season of Lent.

1. I was recently talking to a brother priest about this gospel and he was recounting an experience he had while visiting the holy land. He remembers being on a boat and the pilgrimage leader explained that the apostles would have used nets made of rope and so they would fish at night so the water would be dark and the fish could not see the ropes in the water. But the gospel tells us that It was now morning and so it seems crazy to go back out in daylight to catch fish. Often times God calls us to do something that does not make sense to us or we don't think we will be successful at. However, like the apostles, we need to simply trust in the Lord no matter how crazy his request may seem. And we too will be surprised by our great catch of fish; by how successful our work is when we are doing the will of God.

2. Jesus tells them to put out into the deep. Certainly it would have been safer and more comfortable for them to stay closer to shore or remain in shallower waters. But Jesus asks them to move from the comfort of the shore and shallows to put out into the deep. In our lives we often just hang out where we are comfortable by the shore. But as Pope Emeritus Benedict reminds us, we are not made for comfort, we are made for greatness. We have to put out into the deep if we expect a big catch of fish. This Lent, we are challenge not to just hang in the comfort of our normal routine, but to put out into the deep and discover our greatness.

3. After Peter saw the miracle of this huge catch of fish, it says that Peter fell at Jesus' knees and said, "I am a sinful man". It is not so much that Peter is focused on his sins as he is focused on the power of Jesus to perform such a great miracle. It is as if Peter sees that Jesus has the power to make such a big catch of fish and realize that he also has the power to forgive sins. During Lent we can take on this attitude of Peter. While we recognize our sins we are not so much focused on them as we are on the infinite mercy and power of God to forgive our sins. And so like Peter, we fall at the knees of Jesus in the confessional and admit our sins knowing he has the power to wipe them away forever.

Lent is an opportunity for us to bring in a great catch of fish in our lives; to trust in God even when what he is asking us to do seems to make no sense; to put out into the deep by getting out

of our comfort zone; and to recognize the infinite mercy of God who desires to wipe away our sins. Do you know what you are doing for Lent. As we prepare for Ash Wednesday, we recognize that Lent is a great opportunity to become better, to grow closer to God. Whether or not we take advantage of this opportunity is up to us.