

Reflection for the 5th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle C

The lectionary translation of the readings for this Sunday can be found at <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/020925.cfm>

1st Reading: *Isaiah 6:1–2a, 3-8*

This is Isaiah's *encounter* with God, his conversion experience, so to speak. It changed him and filled him with the sense of God's overwhelming holiness which marks his career (This is where he says "I am doomed". It is what we call fear of the Lord. It is not the fear of evil but fear in the presence of overwhelmingly awesome power.). It shows Isaiah being prepared, with the burning ember and how he answered yes to his call. It is significant that this occurs at the end of King Uzziah's reign because it was also the end of Israel's prosperity and security. The question left for us is, "Do we say yes to God's plan for us?"

2nd Reading: *1 Corinthians 15:1–11 or 1 Corinthians 15:3–8, 11*

This selection occurs well into the 1st letter to the Corinthians. Paul is telling them that the Gospel he preaches can be believed because of the resurrection appearances and Paul's own life changing experience of the risen Lord, his *encounter* with God. Note how he, like Isaiah, speaks of his own unworthiness for the job he has been given. He states that it was the grace of God that made him what he is. Can we look beyond our unworthiness to answer God's call for us?

Gospel: *Luke 5:1–11*

After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." Lk 5:4-5

Gospel Reflection

In 1975 Dr. Raymond Moody, published the book entitled *Life After Life*. It was an exploration of the experiences of around a hundred people who reported having what we call "near death experiences". I read it back then and was convinced that they were true. That was before I experienced my own out-of-body experiences some years later. These are life changing experiences.

I'm bringing this up because Peter, and presumably Andrew; and, James and John had a life changing experience of the Lord in today's Gospel selection. We might miss that because we read the story in translation. If we were reading it in the original Greek, we would recognize that the words we translated as "from now on" means more than just saying "in the future". The Greek word is tied to the "moment" which is the beginning of the future. I think it would be better to say "from this moment in your life forward you will be catching men." This is a moment that changed Peter's life forever and he, his brother, and their partners, left their livelihood behind to follow Jesus.

Just a little note here: I used to think, what's the big deal, they were just fishermen... Bit no, they were more than that. They were small businessmen. They owned boats and nets and had business partners and were part of the family business. And, they were carrying out their normal day-to-day actions when

they had this life changing experience. And Jesus used their normal understanding of life to attract them to his service while leaving their livelihood behind.

Normal, day-to-day, usual, ordinary; don't miss those concepts in this story. I want to share one other story of a person who encountered the Lord in the normal circumstances of his day-to-day life. These are the words of Br. Joe Barrish, the art teacher in the high school that I attended, and at University of Dayton also. He wrote this to share on his 75th anniversary of profession to religious life.

Throughout my years as a Marianist, something wonderful has happened to me. I have come to sense a presence — a benign, encouraging presence in my Marianist living. While I deal with my ups and downs, mistakes and failures seriously — this presence does not seem overly concerned about my less-than-perfect performance.¹

When I read that, I thought, “yes, that’s like the presence that I experience.” You don’t have to be a religious brother to experience it... you don’t have to be a priest; I started experiencing it long before I was ordained. All we have to do is live our normal everyday lives authentically, standing back from the things that keep us from being present to the moment... the distractions. It’s when we can be truly present to the moment that we experience that mysterious presence Br. Joe was talking about.

One other thing: Dr. Moody went back and interviewed people who had had near death experiences as children some 15 or so years after their experience. The most amazing thing to me was that some of them had forgotten their experience. They didn’t remember ever having it. Wow!

I think something similar might happen to all of us. I think many, if not all of us have had what should have been a life changing experiences of the Lord but we don’t recognize them as such, or we simply go back to living life as normal. I think we all have those “What was that?” moments, but don’t open ourselves to the possibility that that was really an experience of the risen Lord.

So let’s reflect on that this week. Let’s look back and remember the “What was that?” experiences in our own lives. Could those have been an experience of that “benign, encouraging presence” that “is not so concerned with our less than perfect performance”. Let’s name it for what it is and develop the ability to constantly recognize it’s occurrence. It’s life changing when we do and causes us to live our lives more committed to the service of our Lord’s ministry of love. We need that.

Personal Reflection:

Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him. Lk 5:10b-11

Question:

What words or phrases grabbed your attention during the Liturgy of the Word on Sunday? What connection do those words or phrases have to your day-to-day life? (Why do you think they grabbed your attention?) What might God be trying to say to you through these words or phrases? What response should you make? What action should you take?

¹ <https://www.marianist.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Barrish-Bio.pdf>

Alternative:

Reflect upon/Share about a life-changing experience in your own life. Why did that experience stand out for you more than other day-to-day experiences in your life? What was going on in your life at that time? How does that experience effect the manner in which you life your life now? How can you open yourself more to such experiences?

Verse by Verse:

Lk 5:1b "...listening to the word of God..." | The concept of the "word of God" being preached and heard is uniquely Luken. He uses it four times in the Gospel and fourteen times in Acts. The other three Gospels use it only once each. AYBC

Lk 5:3b "...the one belonging to Simon..." | This remark, combined with v. 7, wherein they signal to their partners, indicate that Simon was what we would think of as a small business owner. Mk 1:16-20 also clearly shows them as business owners. It is significant that they left their business, their livelihood, behind to follow Jesus.

Lk 5:3c "...sat down and taught..." | This is common imagery for a teacher in the ancient world, sitting and teaching.

Lk 5:4b "...put out into deep water..." | The sea or lake, in scripture, is commonly imagery for life in the world. "Deep water" sharpens this image. It signifies going deeper with life without necessarily knowing the result.

Lk 5:5a "...master..." | The Greek word used here implies more than a simple teacher as does our English word "master". Luke uses it when referring to Jesus as the master teaching the disciples whereas he used the Greek word for teacher when relating Jesus to non-disciples. (AYBC)

Lk 5:5a "...we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing..." | They fished, unsuccessfully, relying on their worldly knowledge.

Lk 5:5b "...at your command I will lower the nets." | This, plus Peter allowing Jesus to use his boat and put out a short distance from the shore, shows how Peter was cooperating with the Lord even though he wasn't aware of Jesus' divinity at the time.

Lk 5:8b "Depart from me Lord..." | Peter calls Jesus "Lord" here, recognizing his divinity.

Lk 5:10b "...from now on..." | The Greek is stronger than this translation implies. It might be better translated, "from this moment (of your life) forward". Here "moment", according to the JBC, signifies a turning point in Peter's life.