

Luke 5:1-11

In today's gospel reading we hear of Jesus' dramatic **call of Simon** to follow him, who Jesus renamed as **Peter**, a turning point in his life. Millions of people since have heard Jesus' call to follow him. Perhaps Peter's call can help us reflect on our own call to follow Jesus.

'Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.' (v1-3)

We know Peter had heard Jesus' teaching. His brother Andrew was a follower of John the Baptist, and now was to follow Jesus, bringing Peter along with him. The first stages of our calling are often hearing about Jesus, learning more of him, from friends or family. At this stage, Peter was willing to help Jesus, to let him use his boat, and to put out onto the lake. Maybe in our calling to follow Jesus, we took small steps at first, going to church, reading the Bible, talking to other Christians, which helped us on our way...

'When he had finished speaking, Jesus said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, *'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.'* (v4-5)

Peter was an experienced fisherman, and Jesus was not, but Peter had worked hard all night and caught nothing. Yet Peter had seen and heard enough to go against his own judgment, even though sceptical, to give Jesus the benefit of his doubts.

Maybe we also took steps of faith: maybe to pray, asking God to be real to us, to hear us, to see what would happen.

'When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.' (v6-7)

Peter is amazed! Jesus revealed something of his awesome power by directing Peter to catch this huge shoal of fish. As with the wine at the wedding in Cana, there is a great abundance, overflowing the small boats. I wonder what has been our experience of God in action, answering our prayers, as we have sought to know him..

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' (v8)

Peter's reaction is not joyful thanks, but conviction of his own sinfulness in Jesus' presence, a sign of the work of the Holy Spirit in him, and invariably the human reaction when confronted by a glimpse of the power of God.

In our Old Testament reading we heard of a similar reaction from the prophet Isaiah on seeing a vision of God's holiness, *'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips,.. yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!'*

Later, on the day of Pentecost, Peter was to get up and call people *'to repent and believe'*. I think an awareness of our own need for forgiveness is always a mark of coming to faith.

'Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' (v10b)

Peter is reassured, and called personally by Jesus to follow him, and to fish now for people. This meant a change of direction in his life, learning new ways, to step out into an unknown future, trusting Jesus to be with him and to guide him. Jesus calls us all to live and work for him, in his service. Peter's call came as he went about his daily business, and as he sought God in his heart. For us all, deciding to follow Jesus brings changes, and the need to trust God for whatever he asks of us.

'When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.' (v11)

There's always a leaving of some sort when we follow Jesus. Peter still had his father, and the boats and nets, when he returned to fishing after Jesus' death, but for now he was to leave them. Our priorities change when we follow Jesus. To follow Jesus is to have a new relationship in our lives, someone to get to know and trust, someone to listen to us, and for us to hear his voice too. For Peter it meant a change from a nodding acquaintance to a permanent allegiance, a commitment for ever.

We might ask ourselves, *where am I in my following of Jesus, my commitment to Christ?*

Peter was going to get many things completely wrong, make many mistakes, to fail often, but he was never the same again, his life was transformed by Jesus. Jesus even changed his name to illustrate this, from Simon to **Peter**, the 'rock', as he became a rock of the church, and his strength of character was to be his greatest asset.

Peter became the leader of the twelve apostles, the speaker on the day of Pentecost when more than 3,000 people were converted, writer of two letters in the New Testament, and was later imprisoned and suffered for his faith.

I wonder where our following Jesus has taken us, and where it might yet lead us?

But one thing is sure, he will always be with us in all that life brings; we will never lack his love or his help.