

St Pius & St Anthony 3rd Sunday Ordinary Year B2

Like every other day, Peter, Andrew, James & John went out to work by the sea in their boats to find out what they'd catch, only this time, they got Caught! They commit fully & follow Jesus! Basically, Jesus tells them that they have bigger fish to catch, yet. They are beginning new level, deeper sea work. Talk about the Greatest Catch. It used to be fish they would net, but from now on they will be drawing people (human beings) into the Kingdom of God. When I hear Jesus upsize the magnitude of their work, (how does that proverb go about giving a man a fish & he eats for a day, but teach him to fish & he eats for lifetime), well here, Jesus raises the level of their work from catching fish to feed someone lunch for a day, to now fishing to feed the people eternally). But I wonder if the apostles fully realize just who caught who, here? They may have thrown out the net, but their seaside work has blessed them to be caught up into a life with Jesus. Those who are used to catching, today, **they have been caught!** It makes me think of the classic Ernest Hemingway story 'the Old Man and the Sea' where he hooks the big one, a huge Marlin, that will **pull him all around the sea for days** before he reels him up alongside the boat at least. Or better, do Peter/Andrew, James/John have the feeling like another old proverb, they 'caught a tiger by the tail' (*Yes, Buck Owens made that saying popular with his old country hit!*). Did they ask, "With Jesus here, what have we gotten caught up in?" Who caught who?

This reminds me of once when I was visiting a family to take their mother communion. They had told me to come in through their garage side door. So, I parked and walked up to the door. It was unlocked and so I turned knob and pushed in. Suddenly, I was facing a three foot boxer dog pointed like a running back, about to lunge through the door's gap. I thought, "Oh no, I can't be letting somebody's dog outside to get run over by car in highway" So, I forced myself on through the door, blocking him, us pushing against each other. But this is when mind erupted with thoughts, "What have I got hold of here?" Or, "who is catching who here?" I thought, "Am I going to survive this?"

I knew I didn't want to face the family when I let 'Ginger' out of the building to immediately be run over in the street, but the equally pressing (fatal) thought was that I just pushed into his home. Worse yet, I had opened both arms to block him getting out, looking like going to tackle a charging linebacker, and the dog had raised up its front feet, putting us into contact, I think I felt it breathe on my neck (this same neck he would now easily begin tearing my jugular vein out of).

So, what now - who caught who, I had a tiger by the tail? Whether it was direct intervention by God, or help from St Francis Assisi, it turns out, this boxer was one of those dogs who might kill you, but *by licking you to death*. I didn't know it at first, but the right choice was to push and block him from escaping. But it makes me ask, "Did the apostles feel that way, "What have we been caught up in here?"

Stepping back for a minute, there may be a question about this week repeating last week's story: hadn't they already been caught by Jesus? Didn't we hear last week that Andrew brought Peter to Jesus and the rest is history? Well that was John's gospel last week. This is Mark today. Both stories can be reconciled together, if we notice that Mark adds detail that reveals a greater commitment and signing on from the apostles today. (Here we are told that Peter/Andrew ***leave their nets***- James/John leave their boats, and Zebedee) This is a higher level commitment than we heard about last week. Today, they take action to show they are now fully in with Jesus, for the long haul. Last week John must only be mentioning an cursory introduction- recall that John said Andrew (and Peter) stayed with him that day-(it being 4 in afternoon-not much time-John 1:39). So, John's meet was a first time introduction, yet Mark adds on the next meet, and 'full-on' boarding up of Peter/Andrew, James/John with Jesus. Now, they are caught by Jesus.

But what does this 'catching' or 'calling' story of Jesus mean for us? It asks us to consider whether we have been caught up in following Jesus or not? Even to the point of reprioritizing our life's work or re-evaluating our life's purpose, changing the direction of our life, having encountered Jesus? But before we assume from this story that following Jesus means completely renouncing our occupation, or letting go of our job/trade's tools, let us keep in mind, the many different ways our commitment to following Christ can be reflected. We don't all look the same. Some people read this story and hear "Oh, I have to renounce my previous life's job to follow Jesus now". But that is not so. Peter and Andrew do leave their nets, but notice that its in the same dock where James/John and their boats/father and hired men are. Fishing is in their bones. These guys were not liquidating their business equipment, they were handing it off to Zebedee and his hired crew. The apostles will keep contact with their previous associates. They keep up their skill set & occupational connections. The same for us. When we sign up with God, God uses every bit of us – all of our gifts/talents/abilities-not just this moment, but God wishes to use all of our past, too. If we flash forward a second ahead in the gospel, we are going to hear many times more, references to

Jesus and the apostles about their fishing work again. Also, they will travel across the sea of Galilee shore to shore several more times in gospel (It seems like some of most memorable miracles of Jesus, involve those old fishing contacts – the fish & loaves multiplication/feeding, the walking on water, the calming the storms). So, to me, following Jesus, and even leaving behind something means that I do first get up and go along with Him now, but Jesus may later utilize anything I've done before. He may or may not have me do or work with the same again, but He sure could, if it served Him and God's Kingdom best. Jesus' play on their title 'fishermen' (you once fished fish, now you will fish for people) tells me that Jesus uses every bit of us- all of our interest, skills and work – now for an added higher purpose too! So whether, we have a dramatic seashore dropping of all things to follow Jesus or not, we still yet do commit to being his disciple, and letting him use all of us – that is what being caught by Him means – I am in the 'live well' of his boat now! When I go with Him (caught in his net) I simply put myself and my stuff at his disposal. How can I serve you, Lord? You may want me to let of something, okay? But He may also ask that I utilize some previous tool or contact from my previous work. All for His Glory and for the building up of his Kingdom. So, above all, following Jesus means giving Him all I've got, or being willing to let Him use all I have, or I've ever had. Again, it means going with Him, always asking, "How may I serve you best?" He can use all of us.