

St Pius & St Anthony Homily 3rd Sunday Ordinary Time Year A1

“Just give me a moment.” Have we heard someone say that to us recently? Usually it means that someone is seriously occupied and will soon turn attention to us, maybe they are chopping/slicing carrots and need to focus on the knife staying out of their fingers, or they are dropping some food into their piranha tank and need to really focus? Or more likely, they just heard some tragic news like an announcement that someone they know has just passed away suddenly, or some big plans just changed drastically, and they need a moment to re-orient themselves before going on. I imagine that is what is going on with Jesus in today’s gospel, as it tells us that he withdrew (retreated) to Galilee *upon hearing that John was arrested*. I imagine this wasn’t the first time that Jesus said, “Give me a moment”. I can hear Him saying that back at the wedding in Cana of John 2, when Mary brought to His attention that the groom & bride ran out of wine; Mary, like all of us, knows that Jesus will take care of things, but Jesus seems to take a minute to come up with fitting plan B workaround, because He responds, “It is not my Hour” (Jn 2:4)– meaning that Jesus needed at this point in His life, to stay under the radar, keep down-low about any miraculous works. That low key work, is exactly what does happen here, because apparently the head steward and groom never realize that Jesus saves their day (the waiters know- but they are discreet and their job description includes keeping confidences-table talk). At Cana, Jesus ‘took a moment’, and kept a low profile (it wasn’t His hour), but today’s gospel has Him, take a moment again. After hearing of John’s arrest, Jesus takes a moment, and then takes to action. True, John hadn’t died, but with Herod’s jails, people once in them, usually didn’t walk out of them on their own feet. So we are at a turning-or transition point in Jesus’ life (*Exit Stage: John, Enter Stage: Jesus*). Jesus enters fully the public stage of ministry (*like Bob Dylan, ‘come gather round people, where- ere you roam’*). What Jesus does, is a wonderful marketing rollout strategy. He retreats first to settle in the region of Galilee to make his Grand Opening- thereby, fulfilling the prophecy of the light of world dawning from the north, the dark regions of Galilee (Isaiah 8:23). He makes his opening public ministry appearance as the Messiah, from the area of Galilee to act out the words of the prophet Isaiah. Think of his action here (that He wills to make the public announcement from that specific area), kind of like the football players who practice and warm up out on the field, but then go back into the

locker room to assemble and then they later make the grand entrance running out of the smoky tunnel (like being shot out of cannon) at the starting game announcement! So Jesus' taking a moment (His withdraw-retreat) is for the purpose of making His first public ministry actions really grand. And they are! Notice the fruit and effectiveness of them. He calls His first apostles in pretty dramatic fashion. I think it would start an argument among us, to say who in this gospel, makes the biggest catch in this reading (who has the biggest fish story) First, there is Jesus and He in one episode, calls a full **third** of all His apostles with the two duos, of brothers Peter, Andrew, James and John (*if He did that two more times, he's done-all 12*). But Peter Andrew, James and John have a fish catch story too, and by them catching Jesus, they have way more than any of their lines can hold (Jesus is their biggest catch ever). Then comes the whole sea of us ahead for the apostles to catch later, as Jesus tells Peter and the gang '*You haven't caught anything up until now-you've been fishing for fish ('lil fish) but from now on you will be catching people –(bigger fish to net for His kingdom)*'. But then finally the biggest catch of all, is each of us as we (get hooked) and cling to Jesus and His life in the waters of baptism. Those baptismal waters are where we are caught by Him, and in Jesus we have caught all that we need, for earth and for eternity. So amid all this fishing around, there are a lot of catches happening.

Which brings us to what we have to let go of, when we follow Jesus. We see the wonderful example of Peter, Andrew, James & John, leaving their tasks, their jobs, their equipment and their livelihoods at least up until that moment-they leave it all to follow Jesus. What a sacrifice, but it also makes me think of what an impression Jesus made upon them, assuring them either by His word, His very presence, His work or His prior reputation, or all of those. But they walk away from their boats, nets and equipment and follow Jesus. And they will be taken care of by Jesus – he will feed them through that 'livelihood' part, but even more they will be more activated/fulfilled and most importantly 'saved' by leaving their past life behind and following Jesus now.

But I always throw in at this point in the 'call story' of the apostles, that I caution us not to misunderstand this new line of work with Jesus in relation to their break with previous occupations, especially as it relates to connections, most importantly Zebedee. I realize that some people are offended at Zebedee's abandonment by James/John. Would Jesus do that? The poor man Zebedee! But, we have to keep in mind who James/John are following- Jesus- He is going to take

care of him too. Matthew's gospel here doesn't say it, but Mark 1:20 adds the detail that there are hired men in boat too with Zebedee. Also, we can trust that though we leave behind something to follow Jesus, He may still have us use our previous skills and connections, but just for all new purposes. For example, I am sure that in the future seaside teaching episodes of Jesus, when He and the apostles cross the sea, or spend night in boat, whose boats are they using? Probably something of their old fleet (they gave away but now re-utilize) or from their old friends' boats/contacts in the fishing community.

As we reflect upon this 'call' or 'catch' story of the apostles, we can be assured that this is just the beginning. This account comes at the start of Matthew's gospel, and we are also invited to 'take a moment' to consider at the entrance of this new year, how we are going to follow Jesus? How we can better serve Him, what might we need to let go of or walk away from to commit to a more faithful following of Jesus. He calls us today for sure, and we are left to ask ourselves, "How do we follow Him?"