

## Homily St Pius – St Anthony 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday ordinary Time Year B

Back a lot of years ago, a friend, God rest his soul, who used to make a point of wearing his favorite Jesus shirt to any special study groups or missions (conversation starter), and the shirt read, “Everybody, even Jesus has a fishing story!” What might it be? Guess who I brought in today? Zachaeus, Simon Pharisee, even Paul? But, in today’s gospel, we witness a pretty great catch of His! In this story he catches a third of his apostles, with a couple alternates in the wings! Talk about a catch, Peter Andrew, James and John! This is Mark’s gospel, that tells of the origin of the Twelve around Jesus, but in the beginning of John’s gospel we hear that Andrew is together & brings with him Philip; Philip in turn catches, brings in Nathaniel to Jesus. At that point, we are up to half the apostles already. So Jesus is right on, when he says that to be with him “You were fishermen, come with me and be a fisher of men.” Jesus is good with language, (*similar pun is when he renames Simon to Peter his because he wanted him ‘solid in faith’ to build his church on!-Matt 16:18 or calls James/John ‘sons of thunder’-they were raucous Mark 3:17-they brought the fire-livened up things!*) and He was telling them that they were good fishermen, but that all their work up to him was only training day for the catchier work of being an apostle with him. I like how Luke’s gospel adds a riveting demonstration (Luke 5:4), of this ‘greater catching’ by Jesus comes upon them once and learns that they had not caught anything all night, so he tells them, to “Put out into the deep!” Score! Both boats almost sink the catch was so large. This seismic shift in the level of work from USS Minnow to a Whale, is what Jesus wants them to take on – bringing in or ‘netting’ souls into the kingdom of heaven. So with Jesus now, these simple fishermen are going to cast a new line deep and far flung with eternal results not just for them but all of us.

I think a most important lesson comes to us when we consider the makeup of this first and closest group to Jesus. They were simple fishermen-regular old folks, going about their daily work trying to bring in some food for the family table and a little extra to sell, use to buy or barter for other necessities around the home. I think Jesus picks these apostles as normal workers, fallible, human followers with all of the faults idiosyncrasies that any of us have, he picks them to show us we need him (yes there is hope for all of us). What makes the apostles great is who they work for; not their own skills/accomplishments. Which brings up, this scene today because a little detail really jumped out at me. First, Peter and Andrew, they were just getting started fishing (casting nets) we don’t hear about them sorting a load or prepping fish for sale in market, so I get the impression they are a little slow or late in getting their nets in water, maybe they have the leisurely habit of too many cups of coffee around the docks, that morning (telling all those old fish stories!), but the detail about James/John is more striking to me. It says they are mending their nets. Now I do

admire them because it sounds like they are good at maintaining their equipment, but when I hear that their nets need mending, makes me think they may not be that good at targeting their catches. For example, when was a kid around Owensboro, one of our favorite fishing holes was called Carpenter's or Kingfishers' Lake. Well a road ran along between the two lakes and some fishermen would throw lines from the road. And there was a low hanging phone line along the road, and we always called that the 'bobber cemetery' because of all the lines (hooks-weights and colorful bobbers hung down from it). So when I hear that James and John are mending their nets, I wonder just how good they are. I can bet their nets tear (maybe with heavy huge catch) but also when they drag over an underwater jagged rock, or some submerged wood stump in muddy water. How many times as a kid we would quickly reel in our lines when a dragonfly jumped off our bobber (they made it shake=we thought it was bite) and suddenly major resistance pulled on the line and we thought we caught Moby Dick. But turns out we snagged a tire or rotting tree limb (or who knows because the result was the same, pull and pull until the bare, curled fishing string end came flying back at you). I wonder if that had happened to James John that morning. Also what may give an indication to their less than 'seaworthy fishing skills), we remember that on one occasion when Jesus wants to feed the hungry crowds (Mark 8:7), he asks about their fish inventory and gets the answer 'just a few' (?). I would have thought so many fishermen in the band of apostles would have had more standby resources. But we know that Jesus goes on to multiply abundantly the small gifts/offerings to feed over 4,000 people. And that is what God does. He takes these humble simple, very human, fishermen and makes them leaders of his mission of salvation for all the world. And their call story gives us hope too. Jesus calls us to serve and glorify him by offering whatever we have. I hear dot said once that 'God does not call the qualified, but qualifies those He calls' (it is not about our abilities-we are only vessels, but about his grace being channeled through us).

Reflecting upon the apostles' calls, and our call to serve God in whatever way we can, a couple bible verses come to mind:

1 Peter 4:10 "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace."

Romans 12:6 "Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them"

Or as Mother Teresa writes in that devotional, " "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." and " When it comes time for God to judge us after our death, he will not ask, 'How many good things have you done in your life?' rather he will ask, 'How much love did you put into what you did? "