

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 6 February 2022

Scriptures: Isaiah 6:1-8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 5:1-11

Homily: Fr. Ken

From Broadway and Times Square today, and all the way back to the Globe Theatre of 1599, theatre itself has been a powerful form of human education and entertainment. As Hamlet said, “the play’s the thing”, knowing how powerfully we are affected by what we see and hear. Drama has a way of gathering us in, compelling our attention, as we follow the story being acted out before our eyes.

Although we today do have television and the movies, there is something special about the theatre, about live performance, that demands our attention like nothing else. And the reason is, because it is live. Here and now this live performance is being given to us for our attention.

In today’s Gospel, we see Jesus make his own kind of theatre from the natural surroundings of lake and shore and boat.

As the crowd is large, and viewing and hearing somewhat restricted, Jesus decides to make a boat into a stage, and as he sits out from the shore, with people on the strand and on the bank, a true theatre is made and Jesus can reach everyone with his stories. The local fishermen got a ring side seat, perhaps even a balcony view of proceedings, and were no doubt impressed by the young preacher. But then he impressed them more. He gave them a sign of who he really is, because he wanted to recruit them into his band of wandering players. He gave them a miraculous catch of fish. They were the expert fishermen. He was only a carpenter/preacher. Now they were utterly amazed; so much so that Simon Peter felt out of his depth to be in the company of this holy man. And he said so. He fell to his knees and asked to be left alone.

But Jesus gave him new courage and had a new career for him. Now he was about to enter into a great drama, a drama that would lead Peter through joy, and deep sorrow and pain. His growing faith and hope in Jesus would almost be annihilated by the crucifixion of the Lord, and then, amazingly, he would see the Resurrection and, together with other disciples, he would be a witness to the risen Christ and would go out to preach that Gospel to the world. The Gospel story, which Peter and Paul and so many others personally witnessed, has been handed on to us in every generation of the Church.

Today we hear St. Paul being emphatic about what the Gospel really is, about the truth of Jesus' life and death and resurrection, and about the witnesses who could testify to this truth. Paul's own part in that witness came as a result of a personal revelation given on the road to Damascus. Because Paul had been so violently opposed to the followers of Jesus, he felt compelled to work even harder to preach his newfound faith in the Lord. But the faith is the same: Jesus died for all people.

Peter is conscious of being a sinful person. To find himself associated with this holy man, Jesus, is too much for him. He asks to be let alone. But we hear the Lord, not for the first time, telling someone not to be afraid. Do not allow fear to halt your life. Follow the Lord and all will be well. And so, leaving their nets behind them, these simple fishermen set off on a journey that has never ended. We, too, find ourselves in this company of Jesus, and invited to be preachers of the Gospel.

We, too, know only too well how feeble and frail we can be. But we are not asked to rely on our own strength, but to follow Jesus Christ. His grace is enough for us. We are only earthen vessels that carry this treasure, but what a treasure it is! This world of ours sees the drama of everyday life, and we are part of it. Let us, then, be a Gospel part of it.

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