Sunday 8th February. Luke 5: 1- 11.

I the theme of Continuity and discontinuity and the tension between the two states has harassed me this week. My reading took me deep into the experience of waiting as I explored commentaries on Simeon and Anna and their devout expectation that promise of the messiah would be fulfilled. Today we hear of the fishermen absorbed in their ordinary and perhaps frustrating work when the extraordinary happens. The image here is of disruption breaking into dulled expectation. The fishermen have caught nothing but the voice and instruction from Jesus cause a spark of response and possibility awakens.

Where do these wonderful inspiring stories find us on this first Sunday in a new month? They are so familiar, that perhaps they fall on deaf ears. We have heard them before, so can they shock us out of our complacency?

Time for some truth telling. Perhaps I speak for you if I own up to struggling with a malaise in the ordinary at present. Perhaps we can put this down to Covid weariness. We all want to shake off restrictions, but it seems that no matter where we turn the dreaded C bars our way. I feel as if I am being ground down in the mundane. I am not fishing, but in cooking cleaning and general domestic chores I am not filled with expectation. We could call this continuity, but I need this state to be disrupted. I know it is encounter with the Lord that brings discontinuity. I need such experience to reinforce who I am!

An Ignatian author commenting on the presentation of the Lord in the Temple, explains while the Modern mind finds the notion of purification very strange, to the Israelite mind certain profane and sacred things including childbirth possessed mysterious qualities that communicated themselves to anyone who came into contact with them and set such people in a class apart from the ordinary. In order to return to the everyday world and activity, such people had to be purified. While such an attitude reflects a primitive mentality, the legislation surrounding purification set the Israelites apart from other nations and gave them a sense of their own identity.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Is there something we can learn from this notion of contact with the sacred and mysterious that may help us with the repetition of the ordinary. That place where expectation of fulfillment is low. Do you like me need a shot of identity?

I find threads in my thinking and experience coming together and they relate to adopting a prayerful approach in life. Now this comes form of a note to self, because I am easily bored and I can lack discipline! So, I have to look for ways to put myself in God’s path.

Once again I turn to Daniel O’Leary who comments on Pope Francis’ approach to finding God in the ordinary; the mundane. This approach has to do with ways of seeing. The first way uses the senses. We use eyes, ears, touch, taste and smell, to discern what is around us. We literally look and take in the details. A second way of seeing draws us in, so that we respond in our unique way. I know some of you are artistic so it may be painting, drawing, cooking, building or digging, or dancing or making music or taking a photograph. Whatever the form of our seeing, it strains through us and it becomes creative energy. The third way of looking is where we **recognise the sublime inner presence in what is being observed**. It can be described as an Epiphany when we see the presence of God in the ordinary. It’s **a sacramental moment of recognition**. For the true Christian, a glimpse of divine light comes through the familiar. The observer is no longer an observer; the person’s presence now shines with the light itself. Now, that is the kind of discontinuity I need in my life!

Do you draw the conclusion that in order to set ourselves apart, to enter the mystery we have to adopt and active stance. Just like those fishermen, we have to put aside mundane expectations to listen for Jesus’ instruction. Where should we put down our net? Are you looking for the sacramental moment in your day? Are you willing to allow it to **set you aside,** even if momentarily so that you leave the ordinary behind?

It is easy to hear these 1,000 words and perhaps nod in agreement and then move on. It is equally easy to slip back to the ordinary. We need to constantly remind ourselves of the promise of God to be with us always. So, even when boredom and continuity dull our expectation **God doesn’t change**. We are the ones buffeted by the changes and chances of this world. What do we do about this?

Ignatius tells us not to let up on prayer. Go back to it. Try new prayers, a new place to pray. Reach out to a friend and support each other. This week the HeartEdge reading group focused a discussion on charity and came to the conclusion that the most important element in **being charitable** is relationship. Any giving can be empty and can be gratuitous if it is not based in genuine care and interest in the other. Our best motivations to share our resources of time, effort, energy and perhaps money, emerge when when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable especially with God. We can admit to the Lord that our fishing has come to nothing. We can say, I don’t know how to pray and I can’t see my way forward. We can say this to each other. Jesus calls to each of us and when we share our gifts and talents and anxieties, we become more than the sum of our parts. When we come together in genuine relationship, we will be blessed with seeing in new ways.

I need to look for the sacramental moment in my day. I need to hear Jesus say, put down your net on the other side. Will you help me to do that?

AMEN

References

*Sacred Space a Prayer Book for the Irish Jesuits* 2022 Luke 5: 1-11

Daniel O’Leary *An Astonishing Secret* Columbia Press North Dublin. 2017

1. Sacred Space 2022 Entry for Luke 2: 22-44 Presentation of the Lord in the Temple [↑](#footnote-ref-1)