

**February 06, 2022**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Is 6:1-2a, 3-8**  
**Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8**  
**1 Cor 15:1-11 or 15:3-8, 11**  
**Lk 5:1-11**

## **COOPERATING WITH HIM!**

There was a story about a blind man and a lame one who were caught in a forest fire. They were terrified. The blind man ran straight for the fire. The lame one shouted out to him, **"Don't run in that direction."** **"Well, where should I run?"** asked the blind man. The lame man told him, **"I could show you the way as long as you want me to. But you would have to carry me on your shoulders. From that vantage point I could tell you where the snakes are and the thorns and fire; and we could both come safely to the city."** The blind man thought that was a good idea. They did mutually cooperate with each other and came out alive from the forest fire.

The story tells us that cooperation worked wonders for the two men. Cooperation saved them from harm's way.

The dictionary defines the word **'cooperation'** as **'the process of working together to the same end.'** It is synonymous with the words: **collaboration; teamwork; mutual support; partnership; active participation; unity; synergy.** The **opposite** of the word **'cooperation'** is **obstruction; hostility; opposition; dissociation.**

Here in our parish, we have seen the good result of mutual cooperation. We have seen the beauty of working together. Through the grace of God, our collaboration brought us to accomplish dreams that we thought we will never realize/achieve like having our own parish hall. Our synergy is helping us to reach out to others in need outside of the four (4) walls of our Church. Indeed, our collaboration towards becoming a stewardship parish continues to develop. If we will continue cooperating with the Church's mission, the seemingly impossible will become possible.

**Why am I talking about the importance of cooperation particularly with our relationship with God and his Church?**

We have heard the miracle of the 'great catch' of fish in the gospel proclaimed. This miracle happened precisely because Simon Peter cooperated with what the Lord Jesus commanded him to do – **lower the nets!** Just imagine if Simon Peter did not listen to

the command of the Lord Jesus to lower the nets. Simon Peter's group would have been empty handed going home and no food to serve/share at the table. Through God's grace, Simon Peter was not hardheaded but instead he listened and said: **"Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets."**

**What happened after he cooperated with the Lord Jesus' command?** There was a great catch of fish, and the nets were in the brink of tearing. But, more than that, the greatest miracle was the realization of Simon Peter of who he is in front of the Lord Jesus. He said, **"Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."** He recognized that he was a sinner in need of God's mercy and love.

In the midst of recognizing his sinfulness, the Lord Jesus called him to a bigger responsibility. The Lord Jesus said to him, **"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."** **Did Simon Peter cooperate with the call?** He did. Together with others, he left everything behind and followed the Lord Jesus.

When Simon Peter decided to cooperate with the Lord Jesus great things happened to him in the sense that he was journeying towards life eternal. He may have let go of his profession, but he gained a priceless possession for working in God's vineyard. His decision to work with the Lord Jesus (*and for the Lord Jesus*) changed him from being an 'ordinary man' to being an 'extraordinary guy.' This is true not only to Simon Peter but for the 'holy men and women,' we call 'saints,' who cooperated with God's plan for them.

St. Paul is another example of a person who cooperated with the Lord Jesus' plan. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading that we have heard, St. Paul was giving testimony to the people of Corinth how the Lord Jesus called him and changed his life. He did not resist the call. Rather, he cooperated with it. Thus, through the grace of God, he was able to do what he was doing for God and his Church.

In the celebration of the Holy Eucharist/Mass, the Lord Jesus is always appealing to us to cooperate with him. He is calling each one of us to carry out the mission entrusted to us when we were baptized. He is summoning us to go out to the world and be his mind and mouth who will speak the Gospel to all; his feet who will walk with the despairing; his heart who will love and understand the lost, least, and last; and his hand who will reach out to the sick and abandoned. The Lord Jesus is appealing to us to cooperate with him, **what will be our response?**

As you all know, we have a **New 5-Year Parish Pastoral Plan**. This plan is the fruit of the parish survey we made during the last quarter of Year 2020. One of the goals of that plan is to bring back 'inactive Catholics' to Church and celebrate once again the Holy Eucharist with us. Obviously, this goal will only be accomplished through the cooperation of each of us here. Please look up! The stars are still hanging in there. It is intentional

on my part to leave it there. **Why?** Just as the wise men/magi were guided by the star in encountering the Lord Jesus, let us be 'stars' in bringing others closer to him present in the Holy Eucharist. I hope and pray that whenever we see the stars, we will be reminded of the call to cooperate in bringing others closer to the Lord Jesus.

As we continue our celebration, let us pray for each other that our only response to the call will be the response of the Prophet Isaiah in our 1<sup>st</sup> reading who said to God, "**Here I am, Lord, send me.**"

God bless and stay safe!