

3rd Sunday of the Year—B Cycle

Theme:

Don't let false humility, fear, indecision, or doubt, keep you from doing God's work

I wonder how many of us have ever been presented
with a great opportunity and let it slip away
because of fear, indecision, or doubt?

Maybe you can think of an opportunity you brushed aside:
Perhaps a love interest from long ago;
an educational opportunity you turned down;
or a career move you passed up.

When we look back in time it's easy to see choices
we should have made but didn't.
As someone said,

In hindsight everything is much clearer. Bart Cumminngs

In our gospel lesson for today, Jesus presents
great opportunity to Simon, Andrew, James and John
when Jesus says to them:

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Come after me and I will make you fishers of men."

What I find striking about this reading
is not only that Simon, Andrew, James and John
see a great opportunity and seize it, but how quickly they do so.
They immediately abandon their nets, their boats, their homes,
their families, and their community, to follow Jesus.
They don't even pack a bag.

Could it be that their swift response was because
they had known about Jesus.
He'd been in their region for a while.
Word surely got around that the
promised savior of the Israelites had arrived.
They must have had some discussion among themselves
about what they would do if the Messiah showed up.

Others, of course, had heard of Jesus.
Surely they also had met him in person
and had the opportunity to follow him.

But they chose not to do so.
What was it about Simon, Andrew,
James and John that allowed them
to act immediately on such a great opportunity?

During my first year of college, a guest speaker,
who was a successful business man,
was invited to my class to talk about the subject of opportunity.
He told us that each of us would be presented with opportunities
during our lifetime.
But, he asked, would we be able to recognize a great opportunity
when it came along, and, would we have what it takes to act on it?

One opportunity we're often presented
is the same one presented to Simon, Andrew, James, and John.
It's the opportunity to be a disciple of Jesus.

Yet, so many of us miss that opportunity because of worldly cares,
until we come again to church on the weekend.
I wonder how our lives might be richer in God's grace
if the weekend Mass became a celebration
of praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonderful opportunity
we had the past week to do God's work.

Today, I offer four ways that can happen for us.

The first to help us seize opportunities to follow Jesus
is to accept that our experience with him will not be perfect.

For example, let's say you decide you want more time with Jesus
in prayer each day.
You may find that added time in prayer is not fruitful at first.
It may become an irritation and cause you to be anxious
about using time you normally use for something else.
Adjusting to change while doing God's will
is often a time to let go of the past
and trust in the plan God has for your future.

Something else that will never be perfect
while following Jesus is the struggle many have with the false idea
that we're unworthy to participate
in one of the ministries here at St. Teresa's
such as being a lector, Eucharistic minister, or usher,
which there is a need for right now.

If you believe you are unworthy to serve God at Mass, consider this:
During the Eucharistic prayers we say,

Lord, I am not worthy to receive you.

Then, in what is called the Second Eucharistic prayer
we say,

Lord, we thank you for counting us worthy to minister to you.

Well, which one is true?

The truth is that we are both 100% unworthy and 100% worthy
at the same time to be ministers of God.
Each of these truths is intended to cancel out the other
so we can drop any false humility that we are unworthy
and move on to what really matters,
which is to do the work God calls us to do.

A second way to help seize
opportunities presented to us to follow Jesus
is to get to know some of the folks here.
Community spirit can be enriching and fun.
There are many like-minded folks
here who want to know you
as much as you might want to know them.

Wouldn't it be worth a small risk on your part to reach out
and make one new friend in Christ here at St. Teresa's.
When your instinct urges you to withdraw,
could it also be that God is asking you
to be vulnerable and err on the side
of making time to be with others who share your deepest belief,
which is God.

We need to find our way to one another.
We need that, especially today.
Consider including yourself in parish events
aside from coming to Mass, such as the coffee hour after Mass,
or the annual picnic.
All year long announcements are made for social opportunities.
Take advantage of the ones that appeal to you.

A third way to help you seize opportunities to follow Jesus
is to consider what you might need
to help you grow and deepen your faith.
Write down your thoughts, your spiritual weaknesses and strengths,
and pray about the parts of your spiritual life
that may need to grow, such as a deeper understanding of the Bible.
Maybe you need to attend a spiritual retreat,
a spiritual workshop, a Bible study group,
or read a book on the life of a saint.

Could it be that you don't think of such ideas
because you're not around people or places
where you might bump into them,
such as at the parish library in this building that is open for you.
There are some enlightening books in that library.

A fourth way to seize a great opportunity to follow Jesus
is to act now.
After you reflect on a spiritual opportunity that appeals to you,
act quickly before your enthusiasm fades,
and before you forget as you drive home
along Woodinville-Duvall Road.
Remember that the greatest ally of the Evil One is forgetting.

Spiritual opportunities are bountiful here at St. Teresa's.
Teachers are needed with faith formation programs for children and youth.
Sunday school teachers and drivers are needed.
Help is needed with funeral receptions,
with parish maintenance and grounds keeping.

Are you able to recognize a great opportunity
Jesus offers you when it comes along?
And, like the disciples who dropped their nets to follow Jesus
will you have what it takes to do the same?

For your homework this week I invite you
to pray the following prayer, or something like it:

O God, help me to let go of
any false humility, fear, indecision, or doubt,
so that I might seize a new opportunity to follow Jesus
before I let that opportunity slip away.