

5th Sunday OT

Luke 5:1-11

When I read Paul's letter to the Corinthians, I can't help but feel excited about how close to the time of Jesus his writings were. We now know that Paul wrote his letters almost *ten to fifteen years* before the first Gospel was written. And Paul's last problem in his letters to the Corinthians was the **Resurrection** since some in Corinth were already denying it.

In today's reading, Paul's reply gives us our earliest text about the resurrection of Christ, long predating the gospels. He writes in the mid-50s; he recalls his preaching of 49 AD, and his own instructions in the mid-30's. The Resurrection was a fundamental of Christianity from the beginning. Paul regarded his own conversion experience as putting him on a level with others to whom the Risen Lord had appeared. It was part of Paul's vocation story, as today's gospel were for Peter, James and John.

The passage in today's gospel by Luke is also a vocation story of the first disciples. Instead of catching fish they would be catching people with Christ as the bait. But, in the early Church, the initial **bait** was the Gospel message, the **Good News** of Jesus Christ.

Going back to Paul's letter we find it is revealing, since it tells us that almost everyone believed that Jesus Christ was returning soon in their lifetimes, even Paul himself. That might explain why Paul did not write a gospel since why go through all the trouble and expense if Jesus is going to return soon.

Paul did write letters of encouragement and addressed major problems that the young churches were dealing with. His letter to the Corinthians as mentioned before, even though Paul gives his vocations story as part of his answer to those who do not believe in the Resurrection the overall direction is also towards how the early Christians celebrated the Eucharist.

We get an interesting glimpse of how their Eucharist was celebrated. We now know that the Eucharist as we celebrate today with our **liturgy of the Word** followed by the **liturgy of the Meal** were not combined in one celebration until shortly after Paul's confrontation with the Corinthian community.

For example, Paul addresses the problem that sometimes when the Eucharist was celebrated at the homes of the rich, which were big enough to accommodate more people, they invited only their close friends to dine with them before the Liturgy of the Meal. This pre-meal celebration was called the Agape Meal, or Love Feast. And many times, the poor and hungry were left waiting outside for their *Love Feast* to finish. Then the whole group went into a large room to celebrate the ***Liturgy of the Meal***.

Paul writes, "When you meet in one place, then, it is not to eat the Lord's supper, for in eating, each one goes ahead with his own supper, and one goes hungry while another gets drunk." He eventually tells them to eliminate this Love Feast. Eventually the Eucharist as we celebrate it today is the highlight of our Christian faith where we all celebrate together, rich or poor, lowly or upper class, and in Paul's time, male and female, slaves and free-men together.

As we are reminded today of our own calling to Christ, whether as a cradle Catholic or convert, we are all called to the Eucharist, where we hear the Word of God and then participate in the Liturgy of the Meal.

Eventually there was a time much later in the Church where the eucharist was celebrated only in the private chapels of the nobles and upper class with the poor and lowly excluded. This was just another situation that Paul would have recognized as Corinthian. The problem is, how would one make converts to our faith, especially to the lower class and poor and then segregate them at the Eucharist? There is no distinction at the Table of the Lord. It is a celebration where the Lord waits on us, or in John's gospel, he washes their feet.

If you ever get a chance to see two wonderful movies, do so. The first one is called, "***Oscar Romero***." In the movie about Oscar Romero, there is a scene with the wealthy Christians of the parish want to have the baptism of their child separately, away from the peasants. After Oscar Romero's own conversion, he now refuses them. Of course, this sets him on a path of opposition where eventually the wealthy not only stop supporting him, but they complain about him to the Hierarchy that he is a Communist. Yet he was only insisting that we are baptized into a faith community of the Eucharist.

As for the second movie, it is called "***Babette's Feast,***" but you will have to watch for yourselves. It is the best movie I have ever seen that beautifully represent the Eucharist, and it does have English subtitles.

Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we meet the Lord in the Eucharist, first in the Liturgy of the Word of God, "How their *heart burned within them* as Jesus explained to them the Scriptures," and then in the Liturgy of the Meal, "They *recognized him* in the Breaking of the Bread."

After the Eucharist today, we will have our Love Feast on Coffee and Donuts in the back of church.