

Trinity V

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[0 : 00] I was talking with someone the other day and we were discussing where we were when that horrific tragedy happened on 9-11-2001.

I was actually teaching a 9th grade history class in Raleigh, North Carolina about the fall of the Roman Empire. When the headmistress, Teresa, knocked at my door and she asked me to come outside to talk to her.

She then proceeded to tell me about an airplane that had hit one of the Twin Towers in Lower Manhattan. That is a day I will never forget and I'm sure I speak for many of you.

We all had those moments in life that define us for good or bad. I mentioned the date of April the 16th, 2007. And people from Blacksburg or followers of Virginia Tech will have a deep sense of sadness over that horrific shooting that claimed 32 lives.

There are certain events that are forever ingrained into our psyche. Things like the birth of a child, a wedding day, a funeral, and other extraordinary events define us and they bring us either great sadness or great joy.

[1 : 28] Here in our gospel reading of Luke chapter 5, we heard of such an event. And this event, this miracle would define, it would change the lives of those disciples, Simon Peter, James, and John forever.

The story is that our Lord was teaching the multitudes near a lake. There were two empty boats where our Lord was teaching because Simon Peter, James, and John were cleaning their nets, having failed to have any catch all day.

Our Lord then got into one of the boats and he continued to teach. And when he had finished teaching, Jesus told Peter then to launch out into the deep and to let the nets down.

The same nets that he and his co-workers had already cleaned after a miserable day at the lake. Peter responds in a very cynical way, believing this to be a futile exercise.

These men have been out all day doing what they had to do to survive as fishermen and they had caught nothing.

[2 : 53] But Peter then says, nevertheless, at your word, I will let down the net. And you probably know the rest. The fish and the nets were so numerous that their nets began to break.

They filled their boat and began filling another when both boats started to sink from the weight of the fish. Peter is absolutely stunned by this miracle.

So he drops to his knees and he cries out, depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord. This event caused James and John to be utterly dismayed and dumbfounded as well.

There was great fear among these three fishermen. Why? Because what Peter, James and John had encountered was beyond all human comprehension.

They had encountered God. The same God who made the heavens and the earth and had filled the skies with birds and the waters with fish.

[4 : 05] This God was now standing in their midst. This was not merely a great teacher. This was not a mere prophet or some great political leader.

No, this was the creator of all things. And Peter's response? Well, he genuflected.

He went down on a knee to bow before the king of kings and the Lord of lords. But then Jesus told them, do not be afraid.

Why? Our Lord then says, from now on, you will catch men. I was talking with another priest several weeks back and he was telling me how frustrated he was.

His congregation was made up of people who used to belong to the Episcopal Church. But they had come to his parish because their church was no longer recognizable to them.

[5 : 10] They believed that their church had capitulated to the culture and had abandoned its first love. That being said, he was frustrated because he couldn't get anybody to do anything.

They liked being members of a faithful and orthodox Anglican parish, but they didn't tithe. They didn't help or volunteer. Nor did they want to get involved.

They just wanted their pretty little prayer book service. And if there was something they wanted to do on a particular Sunday, well, you can guess it.

Church was ditched. And this guy was utterly frustrated. We've heard for a few weeks now how Jesus was criticized by the religious leaders as he went out to the outcasts and to the sinners. We've heard about all the excuses of why people refused to eat at the master's banquet. And on judgment day, each of us will have to give an account of our lives and what really mattered to us.

[6 : 26] No excuses. On that day, our gods will be exposed. But Peter, James, and John did not merely ooh and ah over this miraculous miracle, these number of fish that caused their nets to break and the boats to sink.

Peter, genuflected, cried out to the Lord to depart from him. You see, this event defined their lives so much that we go on and hear the following words.

And they forsook all and followed Jesus. They forsook all and followed Jesus. Now, you and I have not experienced a miracle of this scale, most likely, where fish are so numerous that it causes a boat to sink.

Or maybe we have. Do we ever really stop to think about what our Lord did and does for us? Do we think about the fact that he has rescued us from despair and death and gives us life beyond the few years that we have in this life?

Do we think about the fact that the God who commands the earth and the skies comes to us through simple bread and simple wine? And in that, he imparts his immortality.

[8 : 02] He gives us eternity. Do we think about the fact that when we die or when another Christian dies, death is not the bitter end? But it's only the beginning of a new life.

And that new life will never end. And this new life is not just something we wait for the future. It's something we participate now. Through the sacraments.

I believe if we really, really think on such things, like Peter, James, and John, we will have an attitude of forsaking all and following Jesus.

We will want to take every opportunity to commune with him and to experience heaven here at the altar. And our hearts and minds will never forget his extraordinary love for us.

It is our hope. It is our comfort. It's our stability in a time of great chaos. And it will be the indelible mark that will change us forever.

[9 : 16] As I shared with my frustrated priest friend, only God can move his people into greater faith and action.

But man, when he does, man, when he does, and such people respond in faith, they become dedicated fishermen for the kingdom of God.

He takes the most unlikely, transforms that person, and then sends them out. And they live in that joy and that comfort of the cross.

When that happens, that's when light overcomes darkness. That's when people see life from death. And such transformation will never be forgotten.

Because that's the meaning of life. Because that's the only thing that's eternal. And such faith, such obedience, will never be erased, and it'll never be forgotten.

[10 : 25] Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.