

February 9, 2025 – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Kneeling Before God by Pastor Julio Romero

Gospel: Luke 5:1-11

Long ago, a story was told about a proud fishing pond and a fish. Across the land, fishermen would come and exclaim about how clear the water was in this pond. Upon hearing yet another positive remark, the pond's pride began to swell. "I must be the best and clearest pond in the world!" it thought. It didn't take long for the old fish at the bottom to grow weary of this overblown pride. He had heard it for years, and he, better than anyone, knew what was really in the pond.

Resting on the bottom, the old fish began to rapidly flutter his fins. As he did, the motion of the water stirred up the silt at the bottom. It didn't take long for the pond to fill with a murky cloud.

"Stop! What are you doing to me? What have you done? How dare you dirty me?" screamed the offended pond.

The fish responded in measured and striking words: "I haven't done a thing to you except to show what has been in you all along."

This story can easily be connected to today's Gospel. It seems that the fish caught from the lake stirred up in Peter the silt that he carried deep in his soul.

The miracle of the fish was shocking and amazing—not only for Peter but for everyone who witnessed it. It was so shocking and amazing that Peter felt he was standing on holy ground. This moment reminds me of Moses standing in front of the burning bush. God asked Moses to take off his sandals, for the dirt on his sandals did not match the purity of God's presence.

So it was with Peter. He felt that the dirt of his sins made him unworthy to be in the presence of Jesus. There, on his own boat, he was on holy ground. He felt so unworthy that he said to Jesus, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

Peter was on holy ground. The miracle of the great catch of fish became the burning bush for Peter, but unlike Moses, Peter could speak to God face to face. The astonishing thing—greater even than the number of fish in those nets—is Jesus' response to Peter's request. Instead of going away as Peter had asked, Jesus came closer.

Jesus made Peter his friend. He made Peter his disciple, giving him the mission to catch people for Jesus: to teach the Good News, to baptize, to heal, and to turn people into “Followers of the Way,” as the early church members were known.

The very man, Simon (Peter), who had asked Jesus to go away because of his unworthiness and sinful nature, was given a great mission and responsibility right there on his own boat. As he knelt, begging the Lord to depart from him, Jesus said, “*Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.*” God did not see him for who he was in that moment but for who he would become.

This mirrors Moses’ story. Moses saw himself as the least qualified to serve God, but God knew better. He gave Moses the great mission to liberate the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. Similarly, Peter, at a moment when he felt like the most imperfect and unworthy person, was lifted up by God and entrusted with such a great mission.

Peter was known for his short temper, his pride, and his loudness. He was quick to speak his mind, perhaps the least likely person to show humility or lower his head to another, let alone a stranger. He may have had few friends, but this reminds me of a story:

“Given permission by the judge to speak to the audience, the old man made the following statement: ‘I’d like to say here in a court of law, speaking as an old man, that nine-tenths of my troubles are traceable to my being kind to others. Look, you young people, if you want to steer clear of trouble, be hard-boiled. Be quick with a loud ‘no’ to anyone and everyone. If you follow this rule, you’ll seldom be bothered as you tread life’s pathway. Except you’ll have no friends, you’ll be lonely, and you won’t have any fun.’”

Perhaps, in that moment, all of Peter’s flaws and insecurities overwhelmed him, causing him to fall on his knees before the Lord. He showed humility and at the same time deep gratitude to God for this moment of grace and mercy—grace and mercy he knew he didn’t deserve.

By kneeling before the Lord, Peter became one of the few people who worshiped Jesus during His ministry. This act of kneeling is a form of worship—complete surrender to God.

A.W. Tozer once asked, “What is worship?” and responded, “Worship is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe, astonished wonder, and overpowering love in the presence of that

most ancient Mystery—the Majesty which philosophers call the First Cause, but which we call Our Father who art in Heaven.”

Peter felt Jesus’ love—a love that evoked a deep sense of humility but also admiration, wonder, and devotion as he lowered himself before Jesus.

As part of our Christian faith, we are called to worship our Lord Jesus every week. We gather here as a community of believers to show our love, admiration, gratitude, and devotion to Him. At the same time, we are called to humble ourselves before Him. Each time we gather in His name, we stand on holy ground.

This is the essence of worship for us, but true worship of Jesus cannot be without a mission. We are called to spread the Gospel and Jesus’ love for the world, to see others as equals, to care for the less fortunate, to fill the world with hope, and to make the world a better place wherever God sends us. This work is not done by perfect people; it is done by people like the Apostle Peter and like you and me—people who cannot claim to have clear, crystal waters, but who are redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. **Amen.**