

Fish and Formation: Luke 5:1-11 and John 21:1-22

Pack: a Bible and a journal (optional: paper and crayons, colored pencils, or other art supplies)

Welcome and Settling In – about 15-30 minutes

Take time to prepare the space, locate bathrooms, coffee and other essentials; welcome your retreat partner; set up emergency contact instructions and any other business. (You may want to post a "Silent retreat in progress; please do not disturb" sign). Pray for each other, together, before you enter into silence. Keep your conversation brief!

Come into the Lord's Presence – 10 minutes

Take 5 to 10 minutes in silence to consciously settle yourself with the Lord. Lay down the burdens, issues and distractions you brought with you, at Jesus' feet. Settle your body, mind and spirit in the Lord's presence. Bring your hopes and fears for the day to the Lord, remembering that He loves and welcomes you as you are.

Greet the Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pray Psalm 25:1-7:

- 1 To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.*
- 2 O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.*
- 3 Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.*
- 4 Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.*
- 5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.*
- 6 Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.*
- 7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O LORD! --- Amen*

Come into the Courts of the Lord with Praise – 20-30 minutes

Take at least 20 minutes to worship. Begin by praising God in familiar ways that are comfortable for you. Read Psalms of praise, such as Ps. 100, or 103, or 145-150. Sing songs of praise or hymns to the Lord, or play a musical instrument in praise to God (but don't disturb anybody!)

Then try something creative to express your love and worship to Jesus. Choose activities that will draw you into God's presence, and enjoy your time with Him. Here are some ideas:

- You could paraphrase a psalm in your own words, or write your own psalm, hymn or song praising God for an aspect of His nature or His character.
- Use art supplies to draw or create an image that reflects a truth to praise God for.
- Let the Holy Spirit lead you to worship with dance, or if you speak or sing in tongues, to praise God with your prayer language.
- Take a nature walk and tell God about (or draw a picture of) the awesome things He has made.
- Make an arrangement of items from nature when you go inside, as a praise offering to God.

Meditate and Reflect on God's Word

Today's reflection is on two passages that bookend Peter's journey with Jesus, **Luke 5:1-11** and **John 21:1-22**. The focus is on the process of spiritual formation which Jesus used to shape Peter into a faithful follower of Christ, a shepherd of His flock and a fisher of people for the Kingdom. You may study both passages together, or read them one at a time. After you have reflected on the passages yourself, there are meditations that follow on each passage. Plan your time so that you can have at least a half-hour with each one. To conclude, there is a third meditation on Jesus' final words to Peter.

Begin by reading the passage reflectively. Use whatever style is helpful for you, but these passages are well-suited to the Ignatian method, in which you ask God to use your imagination to speak from the passage to your heart. "This approach invites us to enter the narrative, picturing the situation and identifying with characters that populate the drama. This may eventually lead us to dialogue beyond what is given in the text, a dialogue that becomes part of our prayer." (The Spiritual Formation Bible, p. xvi)

Step into Peter's sandals in these two passages, and imagine what he is hearing, feeling, seeing, smelling, tasting, remembering, wondering... Using your journal, you might ask Peter or Jesus some questions about the experience, and imagine their answers. What is God showing you about Himself, about yourself, and about humanity?

Meditation #1 - Peter's call and formation as a leader: Luke 5:1-11 (30 min.)

Peter's first encounter with Jesus was probably the incident in John chapter 1 when his brother Andrew introduced him to the Messiah. In this passage, Jesus, the rabbi carpenter, challenges Peter, the master fisherman, giving him a pride-deflating fishing lesson.

Make a graph of Peter's growth in this passage. The horizontal axis is time, and the vertical is sense of competence, with "useless" at the bottom, and "can do all things" at the top. With one line, chart Peter's sense of his own competence, and with another line, chart Peter's sense of Jesus' competence, at these points through the story:

- w. 1-3, Jesus teaches the people from Simon's boat
- w. 4-5, Jesus tells Peter how to fish
- w. 6-10, They catch lots of fish
- w. 10b-11, Jesus calls them to fish for people

What do you notice about Peter's growth in understanding himself and His Lord?

Take some time to reflect on your calling to Christ and to student ministry.

What were the critical incidents or occurrences that changed the way you view yourself, and the way you view Jesus as Lord? What needed changing in you for you to become a believer? To become a staff member? (Did you need to be brought down from excessive pride? Or lifted up from a place of humiliation?) What still might need to be changed? In your journal, talk and reflect with the Lord about who you are in Christ and how he has called you to serve Him.

(Take a break!)

Meditation #2 - Peter's Restoration & Renewal of Calling John 21:1-17 (30 min.)

After three years of faithfully following Jesus, in one week Peter's world is turned inside out. He has drawn a sword to defend Jesus, but then denied that he is Christ's disciple (despite vowing he would never forsake Him); he has seen the triumphal entry and excitement of the crowds change to bitter rage – from "Hosanna" to "Crucify Him" – and then the mysterious empty tomb and glimpses of a resurrected Jesus. Peter must be confused, surprised and ashamed of his own failure; maybe depressed, humiliated; and he must have deeply mixed emotions as the lonely leader of the disciples. There is no brash arrogance left. Lord, what do we do now? Lord?

His response is to leave the hard place, and go back to what he knows well; which is not fishing for people, but fishing for fish! (Note that even in his despair and humiliation, he is still a leader; the others, even some non-fishermen, follow him!)

How wonderful that Jesus pursues him again to the fishing boat, and again gently reminds Peter that He is not only a great rabbi and messiah, but also a better fisherman than Peter. This time, Peter's response is not to repel Jesus in humiliation, but to run/dive/swim/race to him, to be embraced and reconciled. And Jesus welcomes him back home, and loves him in a very personal and empowering way.

Make another chart like the one you did for the Luke passage. This time mark Peter's sense of himself, and his sense of Jesus at these points:

- w.1-3, Peter goes fishing, and catches nothing
- w. 4-6, Man on the shore tells them where to fish, and they catch fish
- w. 7-10, Peter knows that "it's the Lord" and goes to him
- w. 11-15, Peter hauls in fish for the feast with Jesus, and eats with him

w. 15-17, Jesus invites Peter to confess his love, three times, and restores him to ministry

Peter has ping-ponged from fruitless pride to fruitless humiliation several times in his career, but Jesus invites him once again, to follow in honest humility, which produces genuine, lasting fruit. In the end, it simply is not about Peter, but about Jesus! Jesus doesn't give up on Peter, but loves him to the end. What amazing grace and love that can transform a man who was both an arrogant fisherman, and later a despairing disciple, into a faithful pastor of the Lord's disciples!

With your journal, spend time with these questions for reflection:

1. How has Jesus called and formed and loved you into being his follower and a leader of his people?
2. Make a timeline of highs and lows or turning points in your own formation (occasions of pride, humiliation, and true humility) and journal about your insights into God's handiwork in shaping Peter, you, and leaders in general.
3. What is the Holy Spirit showing you about your leadership of others?

(Take another break!)

Meditation #3 "Follow me" (30 minutes)

Read John 21:18-22

Jesus has waited until now to tell Peter this very challenging prophesy about the end of his life. He did not tell him when He first called him to be a fisher of people. (Of course, He did tell the disciples that they would all need to deny themselves and take up their cross daily, in order to follow Him.) Even in the Upper Room, at the Last Supper, when the conversation was brutally honest, he didn't give this word to Peter. Now, after the resurrection, on the shore by the fire, is the moment for Peter to hear; now that his heart is sure, and his feet are firmly planted in the Kingdom, and his whole being is bent on following Jesus.

Jesus didn't say these words to scare Peter into obedience, but He spoke a word of comfort that Peter could recall when the time came. And I imagine that when that moment arrived and someone led him where he did not want to go, Peter recalled not only these words, but also the words before them – "Feed my sheep" – and with the words, I expect that he recalled the look of loving trust and full confidence he had seen as he looked into Jesus' face; Jesus' confidence that Peter would do what he said, and do it well, by God's grace.

It is sobering to watch aging saints wrestle with this passage. I have friends who are approaching retirement age, while experiencing seasons of great fruitfulness in their ministries right now. I also know retired friends who are feeling their age or physical limitations, and the need to slow down or cut back on ministry. (One 80-year old said to me, "Old age is not for sissies!") If the Lord led Peter where he didn't want to go when he was old, they wonder aloud, where will He lead us? Will we be able to follow Jesus all the way to the end?

I met a missionary at Urbana 2003 whose husband had finished translating the whole New Testament into a tribal language, after 30 years of work. They came home for a year of furlough

and discernment. She told me she knew God was asking them to go back to Central America to begin a new phase of ministry, and to leave their college-aged children behind in the states. She said to me, "Thirty years ago, we said "yes, no matter what the cost" to God at Urbana, and went to the mission field; now we are saying yes again, but the difference is, now we know what the cost will be."

Take some time to talk with the Lord about your future. What are your hopes and fears? Can you trust them to Jesus? As He asks you, "Do you love me more than _____?" what is your response? Is there somewhere Jesus is calling you that you do not want to go?

A hymn for reflection:

1. They cast their nets in Galilee
just off the hills of brown;
such happy, simple fisherfolk,
before the Lord came down.

2. Contented, peaceful fishermen,
before they ever knew
the peace of God that filled their hearts
brimful, and broke them too.

3. Young John who trimmed the flapping
sail,
homeless in Patmos died,
Peter, who hauled the teeming net,
head-down was crucified.

4. The peace of God, it is no peace,
but strife closed in the sod,
Yet let us pray for but one thing --
the marvelous peace of God.

Words: William Alexander Percy (1885-1942), alt. **Hymn 661; Episcopal Hymnal, 1982**

Closing

As you end your Rendezvous with God, take time to give thanks for your time with Him. Also ask yourself, when will you plan another Rendezvous with God? What worked well, and what would you do differently?

In the last ten minutes, meet with your fellow retreatant(s) and share your experience as you feel comfortable. Take care to honor each other's quiet state and the privacy and intimacy of the day. Together, give thanks to God and pray for protection as you go back to the "real world."

Parting Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you, wherever He may send you.

May He guide you through the wilderness, protect you through the storm.

May He bring you home rejoicing at the wonders He has shown you.

May He bring you home rejoicing once again into our doors.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

(Celtic Daily Prayers, p. 19)