

### 3 Epiphany A 2017 (Annual Meeting)

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Psalm 27:1, 5-13

Matthew 4:12-23

There has never been a more important time  
To be the church,  
To keep the faith,  
To follow Jesus.

That has always been true.  
This is the moment when it is true for us.

For us, this is the time to take comfort,  
And guidance, and inspiration  
From those early followers of Jesus.

Andrew, the first called, our patron,  
And his brother,  
And their friends.

Into the middle of their busy lives,  
Their hard-working, worried,  
Tired and stressed out lives,  
Came something utterly new.

Those fishermen,  
Andrew, our patron,  
And his brother,  
Led lives utterly unlike ours.  
And yet, I suspect,  
Their worries were the same.

They worried about whether there would be enough  
To meet their needs.  
They worried about getting sick,  
About not being able to work.  
They worried about the unjust and oppressive system  
In which they lived.  
They worried about whether they were acceptable  
To God and the people around them.

They measured their worries in fish.  
But their worries were like ours.

The times have changed,  
But the message and the call is the same.

Follow me,  
Says Jesus.  
Let go of all the stuff that holds you back.

It probably won't surprise you to learn  
That I have been worried and stressed out this week.  
I've been running numbers in my head,  
Playing out scenarios,  
Giving thanks for unexpected blessings  
And then turning back to counting eggs  
In the basket and out of the basket.

When I couldn't focus on our church finances anymore,  
I could always turn to the great shift in our nation instead.

And then, when I couldn't focus on that anymore,  
I would consider the gospel for this morning,  
And wonder,  
How can it guide and inspire us  
At this time in our parish life,  
In our national life,  
In our separate personal lives,  
On this changing planet?

I am not a worrier by nature,  
So I was weary with worrying.  
And wondering.

What is there for us,  
At this moment in our lives together,  
What is there for us  
In the story of the call of the first disciples?

And then,  
All of a sudden, by grace,  
I entered the story.

I felt how heavy the nets were that I was dragging around.  
How tiresome it was to do the same task over and over and over.  
How wearying to worry  
About things beyond my control.  
How that was robbing me of the energy and will  
To attend to the things I could do.

That's when Jesus came walking by.

Follow me, he said.

I am not a fisherman.  
I haven't caught a fish in decades;  
I was the despair of my beloved late father in law,  
Who finally realized that I was just out there  
For the boat ride,  
And stopped bringing a rod for me.

I am not a fisherman,  
And if God asked me to fish for people,  
Not much would happen.

But I have other gifts,  
And I believe God has called me to use them  
To follow in the way  
Of the one who teaches wisdom,  
Proclaims the kingdom,  
Heals and renews.

Some of you are fishermen,  
I know.  
Maybe you are called,  
Like those fishermen long ago,  
To fish for people.  
Maybe like me you have other gifts.  
All of you,  
All of us have gifts  
To bring to the wonder-filled work  
Of living and speaking the truth  
In a world where suddenly everything is up for grabs.

How will we show who we are?  
How will we show who God is?

There is a world of people out there  
Who need what we have to offer.

Especially right now,  
They need hope and healing  
The promise of reconciliation,  
Real food and real housing,  
Real health care and education.

They, like us,  
Need a place of sanctuary,  
A space in which to grow in love.  
They like us,  
Long for the renewal of the world.  
They like us,  
Need a promise instead of a threat.  
Courage in place of anger.  
Compassion in place of competition.

The marches yesterday across the country  
And around the world  
Reveal the longing for solidarity,  
For unity,  
For empowerment.

The world is waiting for a promise,  
Offered with courage and compassion.

We have something precious here,  
Where we rejoice under the tree of life.  
We have something to tend, and celebrate,  
And share.

This precious abundance is greater than all our wants.  
The call sounds louder and more clear than all our worries.

Today we celebrate what God has given us,  
In bringing us together  
In a community of faith.

And today, we celebrate  
What God has given us to do,  
To go forth,  
Following in the way of the one  
Who calls us out of our worries and weariness  
Into a new and unexpected life.