

What a fun time we had. Five college fraternity brothers had a reunion in Tahoe. We caught up with each other's lives, talked incessantly, laughed continuously, reminisced, ate and imbibed enjoying the camaraderie we'd begun forty-eight years ago!

Not much of what we said is suitable sermon material! But one thing indeed was. Through all the joking and old college banter we had to listen closely to one another. Not just because some had hearing loss but because what was said gave insight into whom we had become, what we believed and felt.

Listening is an important skill, an art really, of giving yourself to the other in trust. As we listen to another, we must set ourselves aside and give our attention, entrust yourself, to the other so that we can honestly hear what is being said.

I dare say listening is an essential element in human relationships, between partners, with children, at work and school, among friends and in the body politic. In order for us to hear each other we must give ourselves to another in trust. This would be a different world if we all would cultivate that skill!

Today's gospel reading is about listening, about how Jesus set up the situation so that the people could hear his words, but more importantly, to listen to his words and then trust the truth of his teaching.

The people had begun to really listen to Jesus, ***"pressing in on him to hear the word of God."*** As they listened, as they gave themselves to him in trust, they heard a new tone of voice and a message that went deep inside them, that resonated in their hearts, and they wanted to hear more.

***"As the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat."***

Clever Jesus! He creates the very environment (on that lakeshore) so that the people could hear listen and begin to trust. Clever Jesus! He creates the church so that people can listen, hear and trust his words and respond.

Trust is what Jesus wants from Simon, Andrew and James and the attentive crowd. Literally Jesus invited them to ***"put out into the deep"***, lower their

nets, that is, open their hearts to him and experience God's grace and abundance beyond their wildest imaginings.

We are called to go deeper and deeper into life with Jesus, open our hearts to the abundant grace of God. He invites us to push off from the safety of the shoreline and its shallow waters, when it would be safer to jump off the boat and trust only ourselves.

Each one of us today, like the folk with Jesus on that shoreline, who has heard and listened to his word, is challenged by this invitation. What might it mean for you today? What is he asking you to open your heart to? What and where are the deep waters Jesus is calling you to venture into with him in trust?

Today, this community of faith is precisely in this text and the same questions, challenge and invitation arise. Will the impulse to jump off into the shallow water and opt for the safety of the status quo prevail or will we trust Jesus and let the Spirit lead us into the deep waters of God's future?

When we're Simon-tired, as it were, the invitation seems silly to contemplate and the deep waters of the present are terrifying and hard to navigate! In our weariness and weakness we too, like Simon, fall on our knees and cry uncle.

But then comes the Spirit-given crack in Simon's armor. ***"But if you say so, I will let down the nets."***

It is this word of God, listened to, heard and trusted, that combines itself with our wills and leads us even more deeply into the grace and wonder of God. In Jesus we know the hand of God leads us and lovingly supports us in the turbulence of the deep waters of our journey.

No matter how high the waves and dark the clouds, no matter how shocking and deeply disturbing we experience the deep to be on any given day, the abundant grace of God will bring us into joy unimaginable!

We have been called into trust and empowered for this journey with Christ. Come and feast at the abundant table of the Lord and be nourished for the journey of life.