



Archdiocese of San Antonio

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Homily – Region X Vocation Conference

February 9, 2015

The readings for yesterday and today contain striking contrasts.

Yesterday the Church listened to Job's complaint about the drudgery of life. He describes his life as "like the wind" that is passing, empty, a mere puff of breath. Job may not be our favorite biblical book, but it aptly describes the circumstances of the lives of millions of individuals, families, and communities in the world today.

Today, we heard the majestic story of God's creation by his word and his declaration that everything he has created is good – indeed, the man and woman created in God's own "image and likeness" are very good! Sometimes we are confused by our belief in the goodness of everything and everyone and our awareness of the suffering so many people. These two concepts are in tension with each other. Which is true? We know in faith that they are both true!

In today's gospel people flock to Jesus for healing in Gennesaret. It is helpful to examine the context – what came immediately before this and what will occur immediately afterwards.

After feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, Jesus ordered his disciple to get into a boat and sail to Bethsaida while he withdrew to pray on the mountain. The disciples did not understand the feeding of the multitude but they followed his command. This is not the only time that Jesus will send his disciples on a journey to encounter danger, to test their faith. In the early morning hour, when their boat was nearly being sunk by the wind and waves, Jesus came walking on the water **intending to pass by them!** They do not recognize him and think they are seeing a ghost!

Recall the story of Moses when he was reluctant to lead the people through the desert alone. God called him to the mountain where he **passed by** in a mighty display of power. Recall also the story of Elijah who was disillusioned and simply wanted to die because of the opposition he was encountering everywhere. God called him to the same holy mountain and **passed by** him in a gentle breeze. Both men were able to continue their pilgrim way as leaders after the theophany, after the experience of God's presence.

Well, this does not work quite the same way with the disciples, and Jesus patiently gets into the boat with them. They are astounded but still do not understand who he truly is. However, when they arrive at Bethsaida, the crowds recognize him as a healer and swarm to him for healing. In the next scene the Pharisees and some scribes come from Jerusalem to confront him with theological questions about his interpretation of the *torah* and the behavior of his disciples and even his own actions. They are hostile.

Following Jesus is not easy. There is the ready but superficial reaction of the crowds who see him only as a healer. There is the lack of understanding and insight of his closest disciples. There is the opposition of respected religious leaders.

Working in vocation ministry is also not easy. Neither is episcopal ministry! We can isolate ourselves in our offices or homes and avoid the mess that is outside. We can go up to our mountain to pray in solitude, and we must do this. But we also have to go where the people are – where they are struggling, searching, scrambling to keep alive humanly, socially, spiritually. We believe in the goodness of Creation, and we also know the flaws of the world and the woundedness of many people. We are called and sent to proclaim the Lord Jesus and his gospel faithfully, boldly,

confidently, joyfully. We are to help people experience God's love, his healing touch, forgiveness, compassion. We are to help others discern God's gifts to them and his call for them to follow him and serve others – whether as priests, religious, permanent deacons, or lay leaders – whether as celibates and virgins or singles and married people.

At times it is not enough for us merely to pass by and reassure them by our presence. At times we have to get into the boat with them! To encounter them, to dialogue with them, to share our innermost being – created by God and filled with his enduring love.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe accompany us in our ministry today and every day of our lives.