

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany – Year B – The Rev. Canon Joan Anthony 1.24.21
Jonah 3:1-5, 10, Psalm 62:6-14, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, Mark 1:14-20

We have just experienced the inauguration of a President of the United States. It was one of the milestones of our lives, milestones that let go of the past and embrace the future. They are a pivot point, a decision point, will we hold on to what had been or will we turn in a different direction, and move in a different way toward what will be? Milestone decisions come to us continually, some large and some small. Milestone decisions, some are expected and reached after great thought and preparation, others come seemingly out of nowhere and decisions for good or ill are made in the moment.

Such a milestone moment is expressed in our Gospel to day. Jesus is beginning, inaugurating his ministry in Galilee, proclaiming that there was a new beginning a new future, the promise of God which was being fulfilled. He is apparently alone, without the disciples, who have not yet been called, without the crowds who do not know of him, without the authorities who are not yet aware of his challenge to their power. It is the beginning.

It begins with two simple words and a promise. “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” These words addressed to Peter and Andrew are a pivot point in their lives. One moment they are casting their net into the Sea of Galilee, hoping for a catch of fish so that they can support their families and the next they have left everything behind and entered into a new community, new work, work that will be theirs for the rest of their lives. They will never again be simple fishermen.

The gospel tells us that Peter and Andrew made this decision “immediately”, apparently without counting the cost or making a great deal of preparation. One wonders what became of the net they were using and the boat from which they fished. These were no small assets in their lives and yet without hesitation they followed this new young rabbi who had called to them.

And so it began, with Peter and Andrew, James and John, fishermen all, with Matthew the tax collector, and Luke the physician, with women who also were there, Mary Magdalen, Joanna, and many others whose names we no longer know. They became a community of believers, who were called and who answered the call by saying yes, I will follow you.

They followed Jesus throughout the 3 years of his ministry and then with fear and trembling, courage and love, followed him beyond the grave and resurrection to create the Church. The community of believers who through the centuries have continued to answer with yes when hearing those two simple words “Follow me”. And to what purpose? To “fish for people” to tell the good news of God’s promise fulfilled, to change the world.

Today we as the people of St. Augustine’s-in-the-Woods will meet together, virtually, in an annual meeting to do the business of the church. To what purpose? Because we are the community of people who like Peter, Andrew, James and John and all the rest have answered the voice we heard and have in our own unique ways chosen to follow Jesus. The purpose of the church is to be the community that allows us to “fish for people” here, now, in this place.