

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, February 6, 2022

Lowering the Nets

Written by Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

or 1 Cor 15:3-8, 11

Luke 5:1-11



"Master, we have worked hard all night and caught nothing." Luke 5:5

"Does anyone really read those articles you write?"

I have a vivid memory of someone asking me this in the early years of my career as a freelance writer. I can't remember who it was or what precipitated the question. All I remember is that it stung — for a very brief moment, until I laughed.

I laughed because it was a comically rude thing to say, and I very much enjoy moments of unexpected comical rudeness.

I laughed because of the absurdity of the situation: me, freshly graduated and completely broke, trying my hardest, giving my all, putting myself out there, only to have my ego toppled by the proverbial flick of a finger.

Mostly I laughed because I hadn't realized, until this moment, something beautiful: I ... don't care? It was a complete rush. I felt like I could exhale for the first time in months. I don't care.

I don't mean to be disingenuous — make no mistake, I earn a living by writing and I do care about being able to feed my kids. And I will always feel joyful satisfaction with the completion of a job that I feel I've done to the best of my ability.

But the existential fretting over the idea of my own "success" is what I have learned to live without. No, I don't care if anyone reads what I write. In fact, I don't care if you read the rest of this reflection. I'm writing it either way.

So why do anything? Why put any words on paper if I don't really care who reads them?

Because I'm not the one who fills the boat. I'm just the one who lowers the nets.

Today's Gospel passage gets me thinking about the elements that truly determine the success of an endeavor. Have you done a thing successfully because you have finished it? Because it has made you money? Because people are talking about it? Does real success demand one or all of these criteria be fulfilled?

Mozart never finished his *Requiem*, and Chaucer left a few of *The Canterbury Tales* unpenned. You can raise children well without making any money from it (in fact, the successful parents I know are a good deal poorer because of their kids). So, is it notoriety that spells success? Hardly, a CIA mission probably isn't going to get any tongues wagging unless it all goes wrong.

"Master, we have worked hard all night and caught nothing."

Peter felt he had failed. You can hear it in his voice.

But consider this: the Gospel passage simply doesn't work without his wasted hours. If he had not spent a whole night pulling empty nets onto his boat, doubting himself, growing ever more tired and ever more discouraged, the whole impact of the next day's catch would have been lost.

Praise God for Peter's unsuccessful night. Praise God for his empty nets. Praise God that he had enough trust in something other than his own ability to try one more time.

I have done all this writing only to say this: I can't tell you how success is defined. I can only tell you that I think the question doesn't need to be asked. Not by us, at least, and not now. That's a question for the last day, when all of our actions and undertakings, and the morass of intentions which teem beneath them, will be laid bare by the only One who knows everything.

"Did you succeed?" He will ask me.

It is my prayer that I will be able to answer honestly: "I don't know. But I did as You asked."

Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

PRAYER

Grant me, oh Lord my God, the grace not to faint
either in prosperity or adversity,
that I not be unduly lifted up by the one,
nor unduly cast down by the other.

— excerpt from "A prayer to obtain the grace
of a devout life," *The Raccolta*