

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you O God, my strength and my joy...Amen.

My great uncle Bill was an excellent musky fisherman... For those of you who have been around the Wausau area for a while, you may remember his restaurant, Bills Fine Food, which he sold to my grandparents in 1976.

And Bills Musky Club, named in his honor, is still going strong to this day. I was too young to have had the opportunity to go fishing with him before he passed, but I was able to witness some of the giant muskies he caught.

Because Bills Fine Food had encased many of his prized catches, preserved in time and on display in glass cases throughout the restaurant...

Now for a child, who loved nature and who also loved to swim, looking at those fish both were a fascination and terror of mine...

To think, those fish live in the same lakes that I might just be swimming in!

Yet, these fish would not be doing anymore swimming. These fish were already caught, polished by a taxidermist, and placed on display with back-lighting, and a delightful watery scene...

These fish were frozen in time... But it is not their finished product that is the excitement for fisherman... The excitement and frustration are in the act of fishing itself...

And I have been fishing... but I have never been musky fishing... I have never grappled with a giant fish on the other end of a line...

I have never felt the discomfort of a heavy pole, the frustration of the one that got away, or the joy of reeling in one of those majestic trophy muskies.

Because when you go fishing, you just never know what you are going to get...

Fishing of course, is an old profession, and is one that we heard of today in our gospel reading...

When Jesus came across Peter and Andrew who were casting a fish net into the sea...

And the thing that catches me from the gospel today... Is the fact that Jesus came down to the lakeshore...

Jesus met the fisherman while they were fishing and then called them to be his disciples.

Jesus acknowledged their gifts and talents and said... I will make you fishers of people...

Showing that Jesus called them as they were... He met them where they lived and worked and he called them for the gifts that were a part of them...

And if this is true for these disciples...

Then this is true for you...

Because Jesus has called you as you are, for who you are, and from where you are...

Jesus knows your gifts and Jesus wants you to use your gifts... Because your gifts are a valuable part of God's ministry in this world...

And the thing about natural gifts is, they make you come alive... They speak to who you are in Christ, and when you use them how God intended, they bring God's love to those around you...

And while this is a beautiful thing, and while we should all be encouraged to use our gifts from God, we also need to remember... That using our gifts does not mean that life will become all sunshine and rainbows and that everything will fall into place.

Because being a disciple of Christ also entails daily challenges...

Afterall skilled fisherman still have losing battels, frustrating days, and days without any good bites...

Because challenges and friction can also be a gift from God...

Not to harm you, or to bring about a life of difficulty...

But instead, God may provide you with challenges to stimulate growth in you... Or God may provide you with opportunities to discover deeper insight through friction...

Because being uncomfortable, can be a sign from God, that there is an opportunity for growth...

Of course, there are both healthy and unhealthy situations that entail being uncomfortable... And, I am not talking about the unhealthy, or the hurtful uncomfortable situations, and if you are going through something where you need help, please reach out to the right people...

I am talking about the times when God is nudging you... As a life of faith is never going to be smooth sailing all of the time... Nor should it be...

Because a life of faith, involves life... And life embraces friction and is filled with opportunities of growth.

And as called disciples of Christ, from time to time we need to stop and reflect...

To pause and ask, where is God calling you more deeply?

And how can you dive into these waters, allowing God to journey with you...

And maybe that's why Jesus chose fishermen... Because fishing for fish and fishing for people, both entail similar challenges....

Such as, patience is required... both in fishing and with people...

Consistency is required... both to follow Christ and to continue to catch more fish...

Meaning you need to go at it every day, and every day will bring about its new challenges and delights...

In life and in fishing you will be exposed to the elements – some days the weather will be good other days it will not... Which then might entail a change in location, mindset, or perspective.

And if this fishing illustration doesn't speak to you or fit with who you are, that doesn't mean that you are not called to follow God...

As this is just one example that Jesus used to show the complexity of discipleship...

Discipleship is not lived out in the act of fishing itself, but by following Christ, using your gifts, and embracing challenges by being open and vulnerable.

As this allows the transformative work of God to take place in you...

Because Christ, is all about transformation... As it was only Christ who could transform death into everlasting life...

But before he did that... Christ lived... Christ went down to the lakeshore and called his disciples...

Showing that Christ's followers are always called...

And you, are called for who you are, with the gifts you have, and called by name... Amen