



## WITNESSING THE WORD

**LECTIO** (reading): Luke 1,1-4; 5,1-11, and 11,27-28

1 <sup>1</sup> Many have undertaken to complete a narrative of the events which have been fulfilled in our midst, <sup>2</sup> precisely as those events were transmitted to us by the original eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. <sup>3</sup> I too have carefully traced the whole sequence of events from the beginning, and have decided to set it in writing for you, Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> so that Your Excellency may see how reliable the instruction was that you received.

5 <sup>1</sup> As he stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd pressed in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup> he saw two boats moored by the side of the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to pull out a short distance from the shore; then, remaining seated he continued to teach the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.' <sup>5</sup> Simon answered, 'Master, we have been hard at it all night long and have caught nothing; but if you say so, I will lower the nets.' <sup>6</sup> Upon doing this they caught such a great number of fish that their nets were at the breaking point. <sup>7</sup> They signaled to their mates in the other boat to come and help them. These came, and together they filled the two boats until they nearly sank. <sup>8</sup> At the sight of this, Simon Peter fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Leave me, Lord. Am a sinful man.' <sup>9</sup> For indeed, amazement at the catch they had made seized him and all his shipmates, <sup>10</sup> as well as James and John, Zebedee's sons who were partners with Simon. Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men.' <sup>11</sup> With that they brought their boats to land, left everything, and became his followers.

11 <sup>27</sup> While he was saying this a woman from the crowd called out, 'Blest is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!' <sup>28</sup> 'Rather,' he replied, 'blest are they who hear the *word* of God and keep it.'

### **MEDITATIO** (Explanation)

We read three selections from Luke's gospel which help us clarify the Word of God. Luke's opening statement presents us right away with food for thought: the eyewitnesses have become ministers of the Word. Luke speaks in his gospel on two levels. He tells the history of Jesus, but also how eyewitnesses of Jesus become ministers of the Word. And in this way we discover right away an additional double level. We see namely that Jesus is the Word and an additional level: those that are eye witnesses of the Word, start doing what the Word did, that is: proclaiming, teaching and doing good deeds. The development of the gospel is summed up in four verses. It is a clever opening by Luke. The person for whom Luke wrote his gospel is called Theophilus. Theophilus can be a concrete person, maybe a Roman official or maybe a pupil who is now given the complete gospel. However, Theophilus means friend of God, loved by God. The gospel is written for all who are or want to be friends of God. It is written for anyone who opens the gospel and sincerely wants to listen to God's Word.

When we read the story of the calling which is the beginning of the fifth chapter of this gospel we recognize the twofold levels right away. Jesus is standing at the shore of the lake and the people come to listen to the Word of God. Jesus speaks the Word of God, but is also the Word of God. People come to listen to Him and they receive instruction. The miraculous catching of fish makes the story concrete. This word that people hear is not just a word. Simon Peter seems to be the only one who realizes this. He falls on his knees and says, "Go away, for I am a sinful man." The Word makes Peter realize his condition. He does not like what he sees. However, Jesus does let Peter get away. A new life awaits him.

The word of God challenges the people to sail to the deep water. The deep end is the most dangerous part of the lake. The deep water also stands for death. Do you dare to confront death? Do you dare to go so far that you give up everything? It is a challenge that becomes a reality in this story. The three called by Jesus dare to go and leave everything behind. But the story also alludes to the rest of the gospel. Do you dare to take on the cross. Do you treasure your life so much that you want to keep it or are you brave? The story of the calling which we hear, confronts the listener with intrusive choices. The Word of God asks for a choice between life and death. And he who dares to give his life will get it back. He who wants to hang on to it, will lose it.

The gospel shows another aspect. The fishermen called by Jesus are initially not listeners. They happen to sail by in their boats. But they are eye witnesses of what Jesus does with them and they give up their jobs to follow Him. They follow the Word, so that later on - after they have seen everything - they themselves proclaim the Word. In this way we see a chain reaction developing. People hear the Word. After hearing it they dare to sail for the deep water. They see what it accomplishes. Others see in that light their condition. Some let go of everything and follow Him. We hear later on in the gospel that those who follow the Word, become themselves proclaimers (servants) of the Word.

In the third selection we hear about a new development. Blessed are you when you hear the word and live accordingly. The Greek verb used by Luke in this beatitude is used in the context of prisoners. The verb means literally to guard (so that prisoners may not escape). In Luke's gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles it occurs in its literal meaning, for instance when Peter has to be guarded when taken prisoner and in a slightly less literal sense when the shepherds have to guard (protect) their sheep. One usage stands out, namely when talking about the Word and about the Law (Torah) In those contexts this Greek verb is used consistently. It is a standard combination. It calls for adherence to the Law and now to the Word. Or as it reads in another place: to hear the Word and to keep it. Jesus asks to not only hear the Word but to put it in practice. That brings blessedness.

*notes*

**CONTEMPLATIO** (contemplate)

- 1 Jesus is the *Word of God*. He is the Word through whom God speaks to us. By listening to Him we learn more about God . Practically that can be done by listening to the gospel. In our church we believe that in all of scripture Christ speaks to us. By allowing scripture to enter us more and more we learn more about God, more about Jesus, and more about ourselves.

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- 2 To choose *the deep water* is to dare to let go. Choosing the deep water is choosing to follow Jesus. Do you dare to jump, though you do not know what is waiting for you? To become a witness to mercy and brotherhood calls for a life in service to the gospel. That is a different life than what “the world” presents us. Do you want to be famous, or rich? You want to be a winner? To choose for the deep water means to have confidence in Jesus and to trust Him fully. This choice is not a matter of course for it will show you your weaknesses and are you ready to know them?

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- 3 '*Listening*: We live in a world which bombards us with words: in commercials, on bulletin boards, in magazines and books, in the street, on the radio and t.v. Words move, flash, rotate, bigger, fatter, and all sizes and colours. More words with less value. But Scripture tells us a story. Since we have heard much of it before and therefor it rarely hits us. But the Word of God is sacramental. Through his words God wants to be really present. The word, read or spoken, wants to bring us in God's presence and transform us. The power of the Word is in the divine, transforming energy while we listen to it. The Word is a word that heals us here and now.

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- 4 *'Acting'*: The sacramental character of the word makes God's presence not only personal, but realizes also that we find a place in salvation history. The God who is present to us is also the God of Abraham and Sarah, of Isaiah, Ruth and David, of Esther, of Mary, Paul, Francis and Mother Teresa; He is the God of worldwide encompassing love, revealed to us in Jesus our fellow traveler. The word of Scripture makes us sharers in the great history of salvation. Our little history is being raised to God's great history and gets there a unique place. The word lifts us up and makes us realize that our daily, routine life is in fact a holy life: a life during which we constantly understand our role in the holy history of God's saving presence throughout the ages. That is the start of *acting* according to the word that Jesus has given us. But Jesus challenges us further: do we dare to be brothers and sisters in actuality; merciful people wherever we are, whoever we meet?

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<intermezzo>

**COLLATIO** (sharing)

In small groups we discuss the following questions:

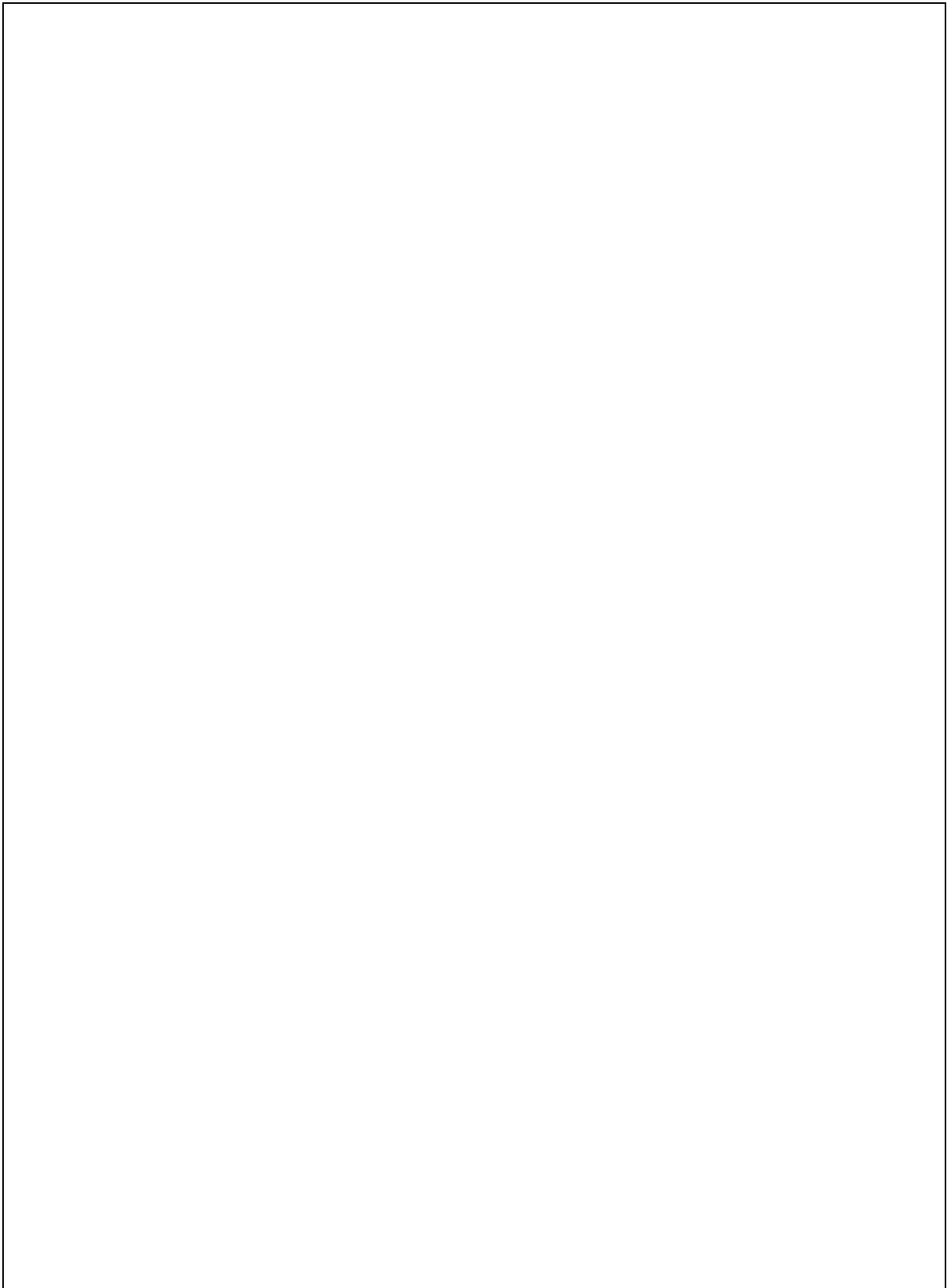
- What calling does God have for you?

- Many people know a text from Scripture which fits or has changed their lives. Do you have such a text (which helps you or supports you in your life)? Talk more about it, please.

- Scripture aims at changing your lifestyle. Mention examples in which Scripture has influence on what you do or what you do not do.

**ORATIO** (praying)

As a conclusion to your discussion, allow someone in your group to say a prayer directed at Jesus.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for writing a prayer directed at Jesus. The box is currently blank.

We share our results in the large group.

**CREATIO** (creating)

For this assignment the following items are needed: the Bible, paper, pen. (coloring)pencils/ crayons, maybe some old magazines/newspapers, scissors, and glue. Work in groups of two or three.

In the section *collatio* (sharing) you answered the following question:

- Many people know a quote from Scripture which fits with their lives or has changed their lives. Do you have a quote (which helps or supports you in your life)?

The assignment is as follows: choose within your group one quote. Think about how you can witness to the Word, in such a manner that your witness ties in to the world of a *specific* target group (examples: young children, teenagers, addicts, rich people, environmentalists, atheists). Write a short account (proper for your target group, maximum one page), in which the theme of your chosen bible quote plays a role. If you prefer drawing instead of writing you can draw a cartoonstrip or you can use existing pictures from magazines etc. Share the results within your group and with your fellow Ambassadors from the other countries on [facebook.com/AmbassadorsWWB](https://www.facebook.com/AmbassadorsWWB) (and don't forget to mention the specific target group you chose).

*notes/design*



**OPERATIO** (acting)

- Make an effort to make time for your witnessing during this month. Share your experiences with others at the next meeting.

- Find a moment during the day during which you can read from Scripture. The daily readings from the Catholic Church give you plenty of starting points . Take a quarter of an hour each day to read, pause and record what filled your day and how you want to respond to God or about what struck you in your bible reading or what made you grateful that day.