

***Homily for the 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time
St. Francis of Assisi Church – Belchertown, Massachusetts
February 10, 2019***

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8 ✕ 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 ✕ Luke 5:1-11

Dorothy Mefford tells this story: One day she bought a potted gardenia and put it in her living room. She fertilized it and watered it carefully. The leaves turned a rich green and the plant began to bud. But for some reason the buds died one after the other.

For six weeks Dorothy tended to the plant, hoping that at least one bud would make it and burst into bloom. But none did. Discouraged, she put the gardenia outside. As she did, she regretted wasting so much time and money on it.

In the days ahead, Dorothy ran into a series of problems: a serious illness in the family, a financial problem, a misunderstanding with a friend. The more she struggled with these problems, the worse they got. Nothing seemed to go right for her anymore. She began to indulge in self-pity.

Then one day, when her discouragement hit an all-time low, she got together a basket of dirty clothes and decided to go to the laundromat. As she shut the door and descended the steps, she noticed a lovely fragrance filling the air. It was so nice that she looked around to see where it was coming from.

What she saw amazed her. The gardenia that she had given up on and had put outside had just produced a magnificent white flower. It was as large as it was fragrant.

All the fertilizing, watering and care that she had given to the plant in the house was not enough to make it bloom. What it needed was to be exposed to the fullness of the sun.

She stopped and thought for a minute. Then it hit her: What was true of the gardenia was true of her life. All her efforts to deal with her problems had not produced a solution. The efforts she made were necessary, but they were not enough. Like the gardenia, something was missing; something more was needed; she needed God just as the gardenia needed the sun.

That story is similar to that of Peter in today's Gospel. Peter and his companions had labored all night and had caught nothing. All their work, it seemed, had been useless. They had done everything they could, but it was not enough. Something was missing.

Then Jesus entered the picture, and everything changed. Peter and his companions discovered the answer to their problems. They had been missing the most important ingredient of all; they had been missing the help and the power of God; they had been missing the help and the power of Jesus.

The stories of Dorothy and Peter contain an important lesson for us: We all need God in our lives. All our human efforts to solve our problems, while necessary, are not enough. We need the power and the help of God in our lives and in our problems.

In turning to God in times of struggle, we discover that God wishes not only to bless us but also to bless us beyond our wildest dreams. God wishes to give to our lives a power and a fullness that exceed anything that we can imagine.

And all we have to do is open our hearts to God's love, to let God's light shine on us and to lower our nets to be filled. God will do all the rest. ✕