

“For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him... When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him” Words from the 5<sup>th</sup> Chapter of our Gospel today; sisters and brothers, may the Lord give to you his peace and his joy.

After listening to a Gospel involving fishing, I thought I’d share with you my expertise in the matter. Each summer, I would go out fishing on numerous occasions with dad at my family’s cottage. Each excursion would go like this - Dad: “Do you want to go fishing in the morning?” Me: “Sure,” (although in my head I’m thinking I’d rather sleep in on my vacations than get up at six o’clock in the morning, so I add) “Make sure you get me up” (Secretly hoping that he’ll want to sleep in too). But lo and behold, Dad is a morning person, so he wakes me up nice and early, and we go up and begin trolling around the lake. But then after about an hour or so of casting my line, I get bored, so I give up on the whole fishing enterprise. I do enjoy, however, taking in the peace and stillness of the morning, watching a beautiful sunrise, and spending time with Dad, so ultimately I’m happy to go out “Fishing” time and time again even though I really don’t catch many fish. All that to say, I really don’t have much expertise regarding fishing at all. But Dad always seems to do well and manages to catch quite a few Largemouth Bass and Northern Pike over the course of the summer, even when the fish aren’t biting. And in watching him and my uncles, I’ve learned that fish are generally active at night and in the morning and that this is the best time to go out if you hope to catch something. Furthermore, we always skirted around the edges of the lake because that’s where the fish would swim about, finding food, shelter, and a good temperature there in the shallow waters near the drop off. Any good fisherman could tell you these things about fishing.

Peter, James, and John could tell you these things as well. In fact, they were the professionals, making their living catching fish and probably trading them in a local market to provide for their families even after heavy Roman taxes. But now the time for fishing is over. In the Gospel, its past morning, and they are washing their nets on the shore after a tough night on the job without much luck. And then Jesus imposes on them to use their boat and then asks them to put out into the deep and lower their nets for a catch. It can be easy to see why there is such resignation in Peter’s statement, “Master we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing.” We’re tired. It’s not the right time of the day. You really don’t catch fish in deep water. We couldn’t catch anything; what would you know, you’re just a carpenter. He seems to indicate that this spot is all fished out. Anglers would say the same thing today – because of pollution and human harvesting, the Sea of Galilee’s population of fish has declined 95% in the last 40 years. As such, it is actually illegal to fish in the Sea of Galilee today. Good luck catching anything. One way or another, Peter doubts Jesus.

Mind you, before this encounter today, Jesus had set up shop in Peter's home town of Capernaum and was casting out demons and curing many people with diseases. Mind you, Jesus had just cured Peter's own mother-in-law right before this story in the Gospel (perhaps that's why Peter isn't happy with Jesus – no comment about in-laws here). Mind you, Jesus had attracted great crowds and was already a popular preacher. Yet Peter wasn't sure. This Jesus guy just kept showing up in his life, and he didn't know what to make of it. "It's nice that Jesus is doing all these great things for all these people, but who am I that Jesus should have any part of my life? I smell fishy. I have no money. I am not educated. I am stubbornly sinful. Just moments ago, I wanted to prove Jesus wrong that nothing could be caught by casting out into the deep. I am embarrassed. Depart from me Lord!" Peter demands, presuming that he had not earned God's love, that he was unworthy. And yet instead of leaving Peter, Jesus remains in his boat because God's love towards us is not dependent upon the worthiness of the recipient. God doesn't love us because we are lovely but because he is love. In any and every circumstance of life, God's love comes to us unconditionally.

Not only did Jesus remain in Simon Peter's boat, Jesus furthermore invited Simon Peter to follow him. You've all heard the saying, "Give someone a fish and they'll eat for a day, but teach them to fish and they will eat for a lifetime." Jesus didn't want to impress Peter simply by giving him a boatload of fish. He wanted to teach him a whole new way of fishing. "From now on," Jesus announces, "you will be catching men, you will be fishing for human beings. Come with me and learn how to do this." As Peter left everything behind to follow Jesus, he came to discover that in this new way of life, it had little to do with himself or with his abilities. Rather, it is Christ's love working in us and through us that can accomplish all things, if only we let him. Indeed, it was God's grace that the youthful Isaiah could prophesy to Israel and it was God's grace that transformed Paul the murderer into the unexpected apostle to the Gentiles. St. Paul declares, "It is by the grace of God that I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective. Indeed, I have toiled harder than all of them; not I, however, but the grace of God that is with me." Likewise, Peter needed humbly to realize that, without God, he wasn't the fisherman he thought he was. When he surrendered to Jesus and followed his command, he could catch anything. In spite of God's grace moving in the lives of people all around us, like Peter, we too doubt the love God and others have for us and are good at coming up with reasons why we couldn't be loved. Meanwhile, we muddle through our ordinary lives, not really catching anything even with real effort. Admittedly, in this life we really don't know how to fish very well. I already told you that I'm not a good fisherman. But Jesus has come into our boats because he wants you and me to have life and have it abundantly. Peter, James, and John left everything to follow Jesus and it changed their lives forever. What will you be doing "from now on?"

Readings: <http://uscgb.org/bible/readings/021019.cfm>

**Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Lectionary: 75**

**Reading 1 IS 6:1-2A, 3-8**

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In the year King Uzziah died,  
I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne,  
with the train of his garment filling the temple.  
Seraphim were stationed above.

They cried one to the other,  
"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!  
All the earth is filled with his glory!"  
At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook  
and the house was filled with smoke.

Then I said, "Woe is me, I am doomed!  
For I am a man of unclean lips,  
living among a people of unclean lips;  
yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"  
Then one of the seraphim flew to me,  
holding an ember that he had taken with tongs from the altar.

He touched my mouth with it, and said,  
"See, now that this has touched your lips,  
your wickedness is removed, your sin purged."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,  
"Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"  
"Here I am," I said; "send me!"

**Responsorial Psalm PS 138:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8**

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**R. (1c) In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.**

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,  
for you have heard the words of my mouth;  
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;  
I will worship at your holy temple  
and give thanks to your name.

**R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.**

Because of your kindness and your truth;  
for you have made great above all things  
your name and your promise.

When I called, you answered me;  
you built up strength within me.

**R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.**

All the kings of the earth shall give thanks to you, O LORD,  
when they hear the words of your mouth;  
and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD:  
"Great is the glory of the LORD."

**R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.**

Your right hand saves me.

The LORD will complete what he has done for me;

your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;  
forsake not the work of your hands.

**R. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.**

**Reading 2 1 COR 15:1-11**

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I am reminding you, brothers and sisters,  
of the gospel I preached to you,  
which you indeed received and in which you also stand.  
Through it you are also being saved,  
if you hold fast to the word I preached to you,  
unless you believed in vain.  
For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received:  
that Christ died for our sins  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
that he was buried;  
that he was raised on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.  
After that, Christ appeared to more  
than five hundred brothers at once,  
most of whom are still living,  
though some have fallen asleep.  
After that he appeared to James,  
then to all the apostles.  
Last of all, as to one born abnormally,  
he appeared to me.  
For I am the least of the apostles,  
not fit to be called an apostle,  
because I persecuted the church of God.  
But by the grace of God I am what I am,  
and his grace to me has not been ineffective.  
Indeed, I have toiled harder than all of them;  
not I, however, but the grace of God that is with me.  
Therefore, whether it be I or they,  
so we preach and so you believed.

**Or1 COR 15:3-8, 11**

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Brothers and sisters,  
I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received:  
that Christ died for our sins  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
that he was buried;  
that he was raised on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.  
After that, he appeared to more  
than five hundred brothers at once,  
most of whom are still living,  
though some have fallen asleep.  
After that he appeared to James,  
then to all the apostles.  
Last of all, as to one abnormally born,

he appeared to me.  
Therefore, whether it be I or they,  
so we preach and so you believed.

**Alleluia**[MT 4:19](#)

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**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

Come after me  
and I will make you fishers of men.

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Gospel**[LK 5:1-11](#)

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While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening  
to the word of God,  
he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret.  
He saw two boats there alongside the lake;  
the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets.  
Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon,  
he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore.  
Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.  
After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon,  
"Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch."  
Simon said in reply,  
"Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing,  
but at your command I will lower the nets."  
When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish  
and their nets were tearing.  
They signaled to their partners in the other boat  
to come to help them.  
They came and filled both boats  
so that the boats were in danger of sinking.  
When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said,  
"Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."  
For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him  
and all those with him,  
and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee,  
who were partners of Simon.  
Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid;  
from now on you will be catching men."  
When they brought their boats to the shore,  
they left everything and followed him.