

Thursday of the Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk 5:1-11*): 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.

"Put out into deep water"

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Today, we are still surprised at how those fishermen were capable of leaving everything behind, their job, their families, to follow Jesus (“They left everything and followed him” Lk 5:11), precisely when He manifested Himself before them as an exceptional collaborator for the business from which they made their living. If Jesus of Nazareth would make the same proposal to us, in our 21st century..., would we have as much courage as those other men had?; would we be able to sense what is the true gain for us?

We Christians believe that Christ is ever present; therefore, this resurrected Christ requests, not only Peter, John or James, but George, Susan, Joe, and all of us who accept Him as our Lord, that we accept Him —from Luke's text— in the boat of our life for He wants to rest by our side; He requests that we let Him make use of us, to allow Him to show us where He wants to guide our existence, so we can become productive amid a society which every day moves farther away and is in need of God's Good News. The proposal is attractive, we just need to know our fears and want to get rid of them and of those "what will they say". And head for deeper waters, or what is the same, to horizons further away from those that constrain our mediocre daily life of anxiety and discouragement. “He who stumbles on his way, no matter how little he moves forward, always gets somewhat closer to the end of his journey; but he who runs out of his way, the more he runs the farther he gets from the end of his trip” (St. Thomas Aquinas).

“Duc in altum”; “To put out a short distance from the shore” (Lk 5:4): let us try not to rest by the shore of a world that lives excessively contemplating itself. Our navigation through the seas of life has to take us towards the harbor on the promised land, the end of our course is this Heaven long awaited for, which is a gift from the Father, but, indivisible too, the work of man —yours, mine— from the service to others in the Church's boat. Christ knows quite well the fishing grounds; it all depends upon us: stay in the harbor of selfishness or sail towards His horizons.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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"The fishing is the better enjoyment which the Lord assigned to the disciple, when He taught him to catch men as fishes in the water." (Clement of Alexandria)

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"Those who confess Jesus know that they are not to believe half-heartedly but have to risk putting out into the deep, daily renewing their self-offering" (Francis)

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"The whole Church is apostolic, in that she is "sent out" into the whole world. All members of the Church share in this mission, though in various ways. "The Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate as well." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 863)