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 struck with wonder at how those fishermen were able to leave behind their work, their families, and follow Jesus ("When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him": Lk 5:11)—precisely at the moment when He revealed Himself to them as an extraordinary collaborator in the very business that sustained them. If Jesus of Nazareth were to extend the same invitation to us in the twenty-first century, would we have the courage of those men? Would we be able to grasp where the true profit lies?

As Christians, we believe that Christ is the eternal present. Therefore, the Risen Christ is addressing not

only Peter, James, and John, but also George, Susan, Helen… and each one of us who confess Him as Lord. From the text of Luke, He asks us to welcome Him into the boat of our lives, because He desires to rest beside us; He asks us to let Him make use of us, to allow Him to show us where to steer our lives so that we may bear fruit in the midst of a society ever more distant from—and yet ever more in need of—the Good News. The invitation is compelling: we need only to know and to will to cast off our fears, our “what will they say,” and set sail into deeper waters—that is, toward horizons far broader than those that confine us within the mediocrity of our daily anxieties and discouragements. As Saint Thomas Aquinas reminds us: “It is better to limp along on the way than to walk briskly off the way. For one who limps on the way, even though he makes just a little progress, is approaching his destination; but if one walks off the way, the faster he goes the further he gets from his destination.”

“Duc in altum”—"Put out into deep water” (Lk 5:4): let us not remain on the shallow shores of a world content with gazing at itself! Our voyage across the seas of life must ultimately bring us to the harbor of the promised land, the goal of our journey: that Heaven we await, which is both gift of the Father and, inseparably, the fruit of our labor—yours and mine—at the service of others in the boat of the Church. Christ knows well where the good fishing grounds are. The choice is ours: to remain moored in the harbor of our selfishness, or to venture out toward His horizons.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "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)

- "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)

- “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)